THE MUSE IN ARMS

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A COLLECTION OF WAR POEMS, FOR THE MOST PART WRITTEN IN THE FIELD OF ACTION, BY SEAMEN, SOLDIERS, AND FLYING MEN WHO ARE SERVING, OR HAVE SERVED, IN THE GREAT WAR

EDITED, WITH AN INTRODUCTION,

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TO

BRUCE LYTTELTON RICHMOND

WHOSE UNSELFISH DEVOTION

HAS SO GREATLY SERVED

THE CAUSE OF LITERATURE

FOR SO MANY YEARS

INTRODUCTION

THE object of this Anthology is to show what passes in the British warrior's soul when, in moments of aspiration or inspiration, before or after action or in the busy days of self-preparation for self-sacrifice, he has glimpses of the ultimate significance of warfare. To some extent the selection (which can claim to be fairly representative of the verses written by those who are serving, or have served, in the present world-war) presents a picture of the visible imagery of battle as mirrored in his mind. As such it illustrates his singular capacity for remembering the splendour and forgetting the squalor of the dreadful vocation in which he was so suddenly engaged—a capacity at the root of that infinite cheerfulness which was such a priceless military asset in the early days of disillusion and disaster. This all-important point is brought home by the following story which was told by a visitor to the west front—one who had lived all his life with soldiers, though not a soldier himself—during the final preparations for the Battle of Arras. He was watching a division moving up to the fighting line, in company with one of our Generals, to whom he propounded the question: "How is it that nothing can break the spirit of these men, whereas the rule used to be that a regiment which had suffered 20 to 30 per cent of casualties could no longer be relied on?" "Look at their faces, and you'll see why," answered the General. And, looking at the faces of those who passed by,

the other saw in each one of them that open and sunny joyousness which is eternally expressed in the wonderful lines entitled "Into Battle" by Julian Grenfell—concerning which Mr. Rudyard Kipling said: "His lips must have been touched." They were not merely unafraid; they all gloried in the thought of the great ordeal to come. And so they went up in sunshine and with singing to win undying fame and deathless gratitude in the valleys of decision where—

> The thundering line of battle stands,
> And in the air Death moans and sings.

They had inherited the blithe, unconquerable courage of the little professional Army which saved the civilised world and England's honour in the still-victorious retreat from Mons to the Marne. For, as the General said, in further explanation of what must seem to the enemy a military miracle, something altogether above and beyond scientic expectation, "The Old Army was the nation in miniature. The New Army is the nation itself."

The poems here collected give, it is true, a stirring picture of the outward and visible semblance of modern scientific warfare. But modern battles are so vast and so extended in both space and time that composed battle-pieces, such as have come down to us from the far-off centuries of archery and ballad-making, may no longer be looked for. The thread on which all such pictures are strung—the new impressions such as "The Assault" and old ballads such as "Agincourt, or the English Bowman's Glory"—is the insular conception of fighting as the greatest of all great games, that which is the most shrewdly spiced with deadly danger. The Germans, and even our Allies, cannot understand why this stout old nation persists in thinking of war as a sport; they do not know that

sportsmanship is our new homely name, derived from a racial predilection for comparing great things with small, for the *chevalerie* of the Middle Ages. In "The English Bowman's Glory," written before any of our co-operative pastimes were thought of. the fine idea is veiled in this homely term:

> Agincourt, Agincourt!
> Know ye not Agincourt?
> Oh, it was noble sport!
> Then did we owe men;
> Men, who a victory won us
> 'Gainst any odds among us:
> Such were our bowmen.

Light is thrown on this phase of the British soldier's mentality by the verse (examples of which I have selected) he writes in honour of the games and field-sports in which he acquired the basal elements of all true discipline—confidence in his companions and readiness to sacrifice the desire for personal distinction to the common interest of his team, which is, of course, a mimic army in being.

But it is as an efflorescence of the spirit that this collection of war poetry by those who know war from within is most engrossing. There has been nothing like it before in the history of English literature, nor, indeed, of any other literature. Even the long agony of the Napoleonic Wars, so fertile in picturesque episodes which stand out in the flux of indistinguishable incident, gave us only two or three poems by soldier poets. The celebration of its great days and personalities was left to the professional poets, who wove out of hearsay their gleaming webs of poetical rhetoric. At school we learn their well-made songs and odes by heart and find them the provender of patriotism; but, later on,

when we happen upon such crude and half-forgotten balladry, much prefer Sergeant Grant's "Battle of Waterloo," with its quaint twelfth stanza:

> Here's a health to George our Royal King, and long may he govern,
> Likewise the Duke of Wellington, that noble son of Erin!
> Two years they added to our time for pay and pension too,
> And now we are recorded as men of Waterloo.

or "Sahagun," that "Song of the 15th Hussars sung every December 21st," which begins:

> It was in quarters we lay as you quickly shall hear,
> Lord Paget came to us and bid us prepare,
> Saying, "Saddle your horses, for we must march soon,
> For the French they are lying in the town of Sahagun."

In the older wars soldiers' songs sometimes—the more often, the further you go back—came into being much as folk-songs are supposed to have been evolved out of the communal consciousness. The old process was not unknown in the ranks of the Old Army in the first year of the present war, when, to give an example, the following chaffing ditty was sung up and down the trenches, by Territorials as well as by Regulars, when it seemed to them that Kitchener's Army would never arrive after all:

> Who are the boys that fighting's for,
> Who are the boys to win the war?
> It's good old Kitchener's Army.
> And every man of them's *très bon,*
> They never lost a trench since Mons,
> Because they never saw one.

But in these days, more's the pity, the popular music-hall song has put such spontaneous minstrelsy more or less out of court. It is the tune which counts; hosts have marched

to it, and since it is memory-laden and a spell to conjure up sudden visions of the French country-side where they dared and endured, for those who marched to it there will always be an incidental beauty, an incommunicable enchantment, in its cheap, catchy rhythms. The words mattered not at all; or rather, each singer set his own meaning on them; so that "Tipperary," say, was for one man a little upland hamlet in the Pennines:

> Where one may lounge i' the market-place,
> And see the meadows mown,

and for a second the very next halting-place on the route-march, and for a third Berlin, the goal of the great adventure, and for a fourth a city shining far above and beyond the mirages of mortality. The time has not yet come to collect the soldiers' songs in many tongues, which are a product of this world-war, and will have, for all who read them centuries hence, the beauty of memorial that is felt rather than heard or seen—the same beauty of romantic reality which stirred the soul of Sir Philip Sidney when he heard "Chevy Chase" sung by a blind crowder, though, strange to say, it never moved him to make war poetry of his own. These songs will be few, far too few—for the gramophone has enabled the music-hall song to conquer even such border-lands of art-music as Serbia and Montenegro and Roumania, where it now takes its place even at the camp-fires and silences the makers of folk-song with a brazen, indefatigable voice.

But for the music-hall song and another malign influence, this war might have given us a few English marching-songs equal in power and freshness to those which were sung by the men in blue and the men in grey, who wrought for the great Republic of the West a baptism of blood and tears. The other malign influence is that strange, literary

convention whereby the rank-and-file of our fighting men, by land and by sea, are made to speak a kind of Cockneyese of which no real Cockney is capable. The origin of this convention is very much of a mystery. By some critics it is supposed to be a result of the far-flung popularity of Mr. Rudyard Kipling's stories of soldiers. In his delightful book of reminiscences[1] Major-General Sir George Younghusband makes the following curious comments on this theory:

I, myself, had served for many years with soldiers, but had never once heard the words or expressions that Rudyard Kipling's soldiers used. Many a time did I ask my brother officers whether they had ever heard them. No, never. But, sure enough, a few years after, the soldiers thought, and talked, and expressed themselves exactly like Rudyard Kipling had taught them in his stories! He would get a word here, or a stray expression there, and weave them into general soldiers' talk in his priceless stories. Rudyard Kipling made the modern soldier. Other writers have gone on with the good work, and they have between them manufactured the cheery, devil-may-care, lovable person enshrined in our hearts as Tommy Atkins.

However that may be, it is certain that the men of the New Army deeply resent the literary fashion which makes them talk like Chevalier's Cockney types—nay, even worse in a more variegated way, for the Chevalier dialect was actually spoken by the costermongers of his time, whereas the diction of soldiers in popular war-stories is as fearfully and wonderfully made, as excruciatingly eclectic in fact, as the most recondite Doric of the Kailyard novelists. The men of the Lower Deck, who are all highly educated specialists, find this literary fashion most offensive to their self-respect, as I know from many conversa-

[1] *A Soldier's Memories in Peace and War.* Herbert Jenkins [1917].

tions on the subject. It may be that the seamen and private soldiers of the 'nineties were in the habit of dropping their h's and emasculating the broad open vowels. It is not so to-day, when, generally speaking, the King's fighting men —an educated nation in arms—speak the King's English. For this reason I have not admitted to this Anthology any of the innumerable pieces which are written in conventional Cockneyese. In such a case, insincerity of manner is as fatal a fault as insincerity of matter. If the writers of popular war literature would listen to soldiers talking, instead of imitating the diction of the "Barrack-room Ballads," they would get closer to the reality which is so infinitely preferable to all forms of literary realism. If it had been possible to find true dialect poems of the war—such as William Barnes or Edwin Waugh would have written, had they been living to-day and of military age—I should have gladly included them. But as yet nothing of the kind has appeared, nor has anything of true worth been written, so far as I know, in that noble Doric—no dialect but an own sister of classic English—which has been finely handled of late years by Mr. Charles Murray and Mrs. Jacob. It would have been a great joy to find one or two Scottish war-songs, for the true Doric is the very honey of musical speech and sings itself so mellowly. But as long as such stuff as "My Daddy is a Fireman," and the revived Salvation Army ditty that begins—

> **The bells of Hell ring ting-a-ling-a-ling**
> **For you, but not for me,**

are in favour at the front, the maker of soldiers' songs in any mode can hardly hope for an audience to sing them back to him.

So far, only the disappointments of the anthologist have been touched upon. Yet there is no reason to be disheart-

ened about the result of a year's researches; what this Anthology is outweighs all that it is not. More, and perhaps better, verse is yet to come from the many fronts of our amphibious warfare. Nevertheless this collection, with all its imperfections in craftsmanship, is the first coherent picture of the British warrior's moods and emotions in wartime which has ever been painted by himself. For that reason it is far more valuable than all the huge harvest of war poetry by civilian verse-makers. When this war began, the latter had a tremendous innings; the number of high-explosive canticles they produced is past counting, and no living critic can have read a tithe of them. One was disposed to sympathise with the complaint of the ingenious Mr. Dooley, who declared that the bombardment of defenceless persons by "concealed batteries iv poets" had added a new terror to warfare. Moreover, many of the products of this offensive in rhyme were clearly, as the same satirist observed, contrary to the Geneva conventions; specimens which failed to explode had been picked up and proved to contain lines capable of giving one a perpetual ear-ache. Mr. Kipling and the Poet Laureate and other established poets, it is true, had manfully resisted this strange *scabies scribendi* and so earned the gratitude of their admirers, not so much for the few pieces they put forth, as for the many they left unwritten. Of all the vast mass of civilian war-verse, very little indeed will survive; with the exception of Mr. Laurence Binyon's noble valedictory "To the Fallen," and perhaps a dozen other poems as simple and sincere, it has nearly all been cast ere now into the waste-paper basket of oblivion. The making of verse memorials is perhaps the only task to which the non-combatant poet may address himself without fear of losing his sincerity, and with some hope of posterity's approval, if only he will try to imitate the simplicity of the antique

models. The famous epitaph on Waggon Hill, above Ladysmith—

> Tell England, you who pass this monument,
> We died for her and rest here well content,

rivals the immortal tribute by Simonides of Cos to Leonidas and his comrades in brevity and restraint, if not in beauty of musical diction. In the making of epitaphs for the fallen, the non-combatant poet, though he may not work in Latin, which is so truly "marble's language," could find a fitting occupation during war-time.

A distinguishing characteristic of the new soldier-poet is the complete absence of the note of hatred for a most hateful enemy. It is curious how seldom he mentions or even remembers the German practitioner of what is called "absolute" warfare by modern disciples of Clausewitz. Of the many hundreds of his pieces (one in three of them unpublished) I have considered only six were addressed to Germany or the Germans; and, of these six, not one was abusive or argumentative. All seemed to be written rather in sorrow than in anger; and the most deeply pondered is the sonnet "To Germany," by the late Captain Charles Sorley, which I have included as an example of a mood that so seldom becomes articulate. In this poem the cause of Armageddon is thus expounded:

> You only saw your future largely planned,
> And we, the tapering paths of our own mind,
> And in each other's dearest ways we stand,
> And hiss out hate. And the blind fight the blind.

No civilian poet, not being a Pacifist by profession, would have dared to write these lines, which any German might take as an *apologia pro vitiis suis*. The explanation of this absence of rancour is not far to seek. No civilised soldier

hates his enemy, howsoever hateful, when he has wreaked his righteous anger on him in action; and the last thing an Englishman would think of doing, when he returns to billets, is to write in the style of Lissauer's "Hymn of Hate." In one letter which accompanied a selection of verse, hasty but impressive, I read this sagacious saying: "Not worth while trying to score off the Boches in verse—we can do that better when fighting them." So invective is left to the non-combatant versifier, who has not the safety-valve of action in arms for his tumultuous feelings. Looking deeper into this matter, we see that the British soldier's attitude, finally expressed in the words of one of them, "Well, it's Fritz; he can't help it, poor devil," is really based on the axiom of Christian morality that it is our duty to hate the offence, not the offender. Furthermore, his shrewd common sense enables him to see that all this "raging against the enemy," which Bismarck praised as commendable in a war-like nation, is a waste of will-power and tissue. The tenacity of the British people in warfare is largely due, no doubt, to their faculty of economising emotions in a crisis, of avoiding all the excesses in word and thought which make for nervous exhaustion in a nation or an individual. Hatred, as psychologists teach us, uses up nervous energy; the very visage of the hater is that of an athlete who is making his final effort in some feat of strength or swiftness.

Very little verse seems to have been written by German soldiers since the war began. Such tributes as were paid to "Father Blücher" by his men are altogether lacking; even Hindenburg, though supposed to be fashioned of the same knotted timber as Luther and Bismarck, has not inspired a single soldier-poet. The truth is that Hindenburg is a deity, or rather a fetish, only to the non-combatant German. It would seem that the German soldiers, unlike

the French, or the British, have lost that faculty of hero-worship which, even if rooted in illusion, multiplies the man-power of an army in wondrous wise. Hero-worship is one of the spiritual factors overlooked by the inventors of Germany's system of scientific warfare, which might be compared with the invasion of the body by microbes—the bacilli of a "Grey Plague," as it were—actuated by a blind instinctive lust of destruction, as in this picture of a fever:

> Billions with billions wildly wrought,
> Unarmed, uncaptained, and untaught;
> For them no flaring battle-cry,
> No flaming banners tost on high.

Even if the soldiers of the Allies had not been higher in the scale of spirituality than leucocytes, yet the German attack on civilisation must have failed—for the bodies politic invaded were sound and healthy, and the cleansing sun and the sunlit air were also allied against the disease engendered in darkness and corruption. Of the small amount of verse written by German soldiers since the war began, and printed in German newspapers, nearly all is but flagrant rhetoric, noisy rather than strong, and "bloody-rooted though leaf-verdant," seeing that it grows out of a theory of national conduct which, having murdered peace, has aimed further at murdering war. The very few German trench poets are moved more by hatred for other people's countries than by love of their own, and, as munitions of spirituality, their poems are of less value than Zulu war-chants. And if we believe, with Napoleon the Great—a tyrant subject to ὕβρις, but not a barbarian—that war is three-fourths a moral issue, this non-moral stuff is yet another ominous sign that the German Army is doomed to die of its own soullessness, perhaps to run down sud-

denly like a piece of clockwork with an exhausted spring.

Another distinguishing characteristic of the work of our soldier-poets is the absence of the note of what may perhaps be called professional patriotism. The word "patriot" does not occur once in all the pieces I have read. Why? Because the soldier's love of his land, for which he willingly sacrifices all that he has been, all that he might be, is something inexpressive, never to be directly intimated, much less anatomised, in terms of 'ics and 'isms. Even so married lovers, in the first abounding joy of possession, never discuss the nature of love, but talk as a rule of trifling matters which are yet looked on as symbols of their singular intimacy. As soon as they begin to philosophise about passion, the true at-one-ment has passed; they are on the way to being merely in love with loving rather than with one another. The soldier instinctively feels that, as soon as ever love of one's country and all that inhabits there is thought of as "patriotism," the best of its spiritual fragrance is beginning to be lost. It is then as a flower entered in a botanist's museum; a quality once soul-compelling and inexplicable which must now be explained and justified; a thing to be dried, dissected, lectured upon, argued about. And in the end this mere philosophic 'ism is apt to become nothing better than a form of politics; a trick of logomachy which the partisan may seize for his own benefit, and refuse to all his opponents. Hence, the oft-quoted saying of Dr. Johnson, the most English of Englishmen, which has been so frequently and so foolishly used as an argument in favour of the cosmopolite's contention that man is but "parcelled out in men" by the sense of nationality. The soldier who devotes himself to the service, blissful, sacrificial, keen, of his one and only Motherland, has the self-same suspicion of the man who brags of his patriotism—party politicians will do well to

remember this fact when the war is over and they go vote-hunting once more. In his case only the patriotism which serves in silence counts, or will count at all; the partisan who thinks to curry favour by calling himself a patriot will be in the position of a person who styles himself a gentleman, and so becomes suspected of being merely gentlemanly.

Wisely and warily then, the modern Sidneys and Raleighs never put to their lips the brazen trumpet of self-advertising patriotism. Their love of country is expressed in a varied symbolism—in longing, lingering glances at the land which may not be able to give them even a grave, at the life relinquished which will yet be theirs again for evermore. Rupert Brooke's wonderful sonnet which begins,

> If I should die, think only this of me:
> That there's some corner of a foreign field
> That is for ever England,

is the subtlest form of this beautiful symbolism—it would be a conceit in the Elizabethan sense but for the deep tenderness which irradiates it with delight from within and lifts it far above the fantastical.

Lieutenant Geoffrey Howard's "England" begins as finely in a more direct way, and is full of pride in the tremendous power of the little land so greatly beloved:

> Her seed is sown about the world. The seas
> For Her have paved their waters. She is known
> In swamps that steam about the burning zone,
> And dreaded in the last white lands that freeze.

And altogether worthy of comparison with these two sonnets is the poem in which Lieutenant Robert Nichols is suddenly aware that the last self-sacrifice, after all, is but the

price that is due for the beauty of England inwrought inextricably in his being:

> The gorse upon the twilit down,
> The English loam so sunset brown,
> The bowed pines and the sheep-bell's clamour,
> The wet, lit lane and the yellow-hammer,
> The orchard and the chaffinch song,
> Only to the Brave belong;
> And he shall lose their joy for ay,
> If their price he cannot pay.

Also he sees, in the self-same moment of vision, that the bravery of her lost sons will add to the beauty of the land adored. Furthermore, these soldier-poets ask nothing of England for themselves; they are not sorry for themselves because she is "cold and will not understand"; they are well content if only she will remain herself, the Gloriana of all the lands that ever have been or ever shall be. Therein their patriotism (to use the cold, inadequate, apologetic term) exceeds that of the ancient Athenians, for whom Athens was not a mother-queen but a darling, dangerous mistress . . . so that the withdrawal of her favour was poison in the very heart's blood, driving Alcibiades into ruthless treachery and making of Thucydides a merciless cynic, whose history was intended to hold up the violet-crowned city to the smiling derision of all sequent centuries. Only in Houston Chamberlain has the ancient type of Greek traitor, the victim of an ingrowing egoism, dismally revisited this tragic star. That Germany's pride is less than ours appears in the fact that the Germans have used him as the Spartans used Alcibiades, whereas we have taken none of the help proffered by the many Germans who had already sold Germany in their squalid souls.

The symbolism in which love of country is shadowed

forth in the true English war-poetry assumes many forms in this Anthology. It is variously shown, this dominant emotion, in abiding memories of sights and sounds and odours of the green country-side, the turmoil and clangour of great cities, the historic towns inscribed with the "frozen music" of unravished centuries, the curious laws and quaint customs of famous schools and ancient universities, the more humane games which teach an unselfish discipline, the treasured books which are a mirror of the past that flashes light into the future. Now and again, also, there is a glimpse of the certainty that the dread glittering visage of war is what it has always been—that, as we are but guests of England's dead in their serried patience, so we go out to fight, or come back with thanksgiving, accompanied by ghostly comrades.

But all this, and much more besides, is best learnt from the poems I have selected, the least skilful of which will have for our posterity the beauty of memorial. Many of these soldier-poets have already fallen in action; in every case—for example, in that of Captain Robert Palmer's one poem—each piece will be accepted as a *testamentum militare,* bequeathing valour without rancour or repining as an heirloom to future generations. One generation will have all but perished before the end comes; few indeed will return to their former habitations in Oxford of all who bound themselves to return when the war was over and see that the old traditions were renewed and kept up by those who were too young to go to the war. The tremendous loss the nation will have suffered would be made manifest to all visitors to these ancient seats of learning if the American custom of class parades on academic festivals existed in this country. At Harvard on one such occasion some years ago there was a deep silence when the classes of the years of the Civil War were passing—so

few of those who graduated then had survived! But the youth we have lost in these dread years has not perished in vain; if "the spring has gone out of the year," as Pericles lamented, yet we are immeasurably the richer for the spirituality they have bequeathed to us, of which the poems in this book are an enduring expression. The time has not yet come to estimate the influence of their work on English literature in the nearer and further future. It may well be that the saying of one of the least conventional of them—

> On Achi Baba's rock their bones
> Whiten, and on Flanders' plain,
> But of their travailings and groans
> Poetry is born again,

may be fulfilled in ways undreamed of. For the most part they have preferred *stare super antiquas vias;* to keep to conventional forms (such as the sonnet) and to use the traditional currency of thought even when they were thinking in a new way. There are not wanting those who have fashioned new bottles for the new wine of aspiration; some of these voices indeed cry aloud from the "battered trenches" against the established order of things. Some of them hope, when the "Red war is a dim rose in time," to create out of passion in retrospect poems that shall be nobler and more heartening than those wrought of too immediate passion. May they live long and labour to that high end! All of them, as I know well, hope to rebuild our shattered national life so that it may be better worth fighting for. It is with sword and lyre that every new city nearer and yet nearer to the very *Civitas Dei* must be builded up. In the new sense of comradeship, which is the secret of our victorious warfare, and is an underlying motive of many of these poems, and explicit in but a few (being al-

most too sacred for an Englishman to write about) rests our best hope for the England that is to be. If the all-engrossing love of the regimental officer for his men, so poignantly expressed in the lines by Robert Nichols—

> Was there love once? I have forgotten her.
> Was there grief once? Grief still is mine.
> Other loves I have; men rough, but men who stir
> More joy, more grief, than love of thee and thine.
>
> Faces cheerful, full of whimsical mirth,
> Lined by the wind, burned by the sun,
> Bodies enraptured by the abounding earth,
> As whose children, brothers we are and one—

or with even greater force in two simple lines from a poem by Lieutenant E. A. Mackintosh to the fathers of his friends fallen in action:

> You were only their fathers,
> I was their officer,—

if this spirit can only be carried on into the hard days of the coming peace-time, we may surely await the future with a firm faith and without any amazement. Here, then, is a book of the munitions of remembrance and hopefulness.

E. B. Osborn.

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the poems taken from "Ballads of Battle," by Sergeant Joseph Lee, and from "The Old Way," by Captain Ronald Hopwood, R.N.

A. J. is a soldier; Imtarfa is a naval officer. The other pieces signed with initials are by civilian authors, and have been included—perhaps temporarily—to complete the picture of the spirit of British warfare. In all cases they are included on the express advice of military critics. I have to thank the Head Master of Eton for the lines "To Charles Lister," Mr. Ian Colvin for the spirited ballad of the Battle of the Falkland Islands, Mrs. Plowman for the poems which so poignantly depict the lot of the soldier's wife, and Miss Roma White for the opinions of a Fisherman (necessarily a combatant in a very real sense) on the Battle of Jutland.

Finally, I am indebted to the literary executor of the late Rupert Brooke and Messrs. Sidgwick and Jackson for permission to reprint two of the sonnets in "1914 and Other Poems."

It is hoped to extend this Anthology and make it fully representative as time goes on; for example, the fine work of the soldier poets of the Dominions will have to be included. I should be very grateful to readers who would call my attention to poems of distinction, published or unpublished, by authors in this country or in the Dominions who have "arrived" too late to be represented in the present series.

E. B. O.

LIST OF AUTHORS

A. J.	The Tryst, 272
Alchin, Captain Gordon, R.F.C. and R.G.A.	The Road, 45; A Song of the Plane, 109; Two Pictures, 111; Per Ardua ad Astra, 113; Reconnaissance, 114
Asquith, Lieutenant Herbert, R.F.A.	To a Baby found paddling near the Lines, 65; War's Cataract, 144
✠Brooke, Sub-Lieutenant Rupert, R.N.V.R. (died in the Ægean Sea, April 23, 1915)	If I should Die, 3; Gifts of the Dead, 143
C. A. A.	To Charles Lister, 140
Corbett, Lieutenant Noel M. F., R.N.	To a Naval Cadet, 86; Lines written somewhere in the North Sea, 88
✠Coulson, Sergeant Leslie, Royal Fusiliers (killed in action, October 7)	The God who waits, 285; Judgment, 288; The Rainbow, 291
✠Dennys, Captain Richard M., Loyal North Lancashire Regiment (died of wounds received in the Somme Advance, July 24, 1916)	Better Far to Pass Away, 32
Frankau, Captain Gilbert, R.F.A. Staff Captain	Eyes in the Air, 105
Graham, Captain H. S., Royal Engineers (Fortress)	In the Lower Garden, 164; Mother's Birthday, 246
Graves, Captain Robert, Royal Welsh Fusiliers	Big Words, 25; Goliath and David, 134; Escape, 293
✠Grenfell, Captain the Hon. Julian, D.S.O., Royal Dragoons (died of wounds, May 27, 1915)	Into Battle, 19; To a Black Greyhound, 201; Hymn to the Wild Boar, 203; The Hills, 278

✠Grenfell, Lieutenant the Hon. Gerald William, Rifle Brigade (killed in action July 30, 1915)	To John, 139
Gurney, Private Ivor, Gloucester Regiment	Strange Service, 14; To the Poet before Battle, 30; To Certain Comrades, 130; Afterwards, 152
Harvey, Lieutenant F. W., D.C.M., Gloucester Regiment (prisoner of war in Germany)	If we Return, 150; A People Renewed, 151; Cricket: the Catch, 207; The Soldier speaks, 233; In Flanders, 238; To his Maid, 254
Herbert, Captain the Hon. Aubrey, M.P., Irish Guards, Interpreter	R. B., 128; To R—— at Anzac, 136
✠Hodgson, Lieutenant William Noel, M.C., Devon Regiment (killed in action, July 1, 1916)	Reverie, 6; Before Action, 22; Release, 42; Ave, Mater—Atque Vale, 184
Hopwood, Captain Ronald A., R.N.	The Old Way, 73
Hussey, Lieutenant Dynely, Lancashire Fusiliers	Ode to a Young Man, 132; Easter Even, 221; Homecoming, 236; An Oxford Retrospect, 188; Rainbow, 256
Hutcheon, Lieutenant Lessel, R.F.C.	The Flight to Flanders, 115
I. C.	Battle of Falkland Isles, 90;
Imtarfa	Guns at Sea, 94
James, Commander William M., R.N.	Song of the White Ensign, 78; Undying Days, 82
Jenkins, Lieutenant A. L., Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry	The Spirit of Womanhood: I. Sending, 259; II. Rebellion, 259; III. Peace, 260; Outposts, 269
Lee, Sergeant Joseph, Black Watch	The Home-coming, 215; The Half-hour's Furlough, 224; The Drum, 234; The Broken Heart, 239

✠Littlejohn, Company-Sergeant-Major W. H., Middlesex Regiment (killed in action, April 10, 1917) — Holy Communion Service, Suvla Bay, 171; Suvla Bay, 251; A Prayer, 284; The Hospital Ship, 289

MacGill, Sergeant Patrick, Irish Rifles — In the Morning, 40; The Star-shell, 53

Matthews, Private Harley, A.I.F. — The Sleep of Death, 227

Mackintosh, Lieut. E. A. M.C., Seaforth Highlanders — Cha Till Macgruimein, 218

Nichols, Lieutenant Robert, R.F.A. — At the Wars, 4; Farewell, 7; The Approach: I. In the Grass: Halt by the Wayside, 26; II. On the Way Up, 27; III. Nearer, 28; Comrades, 49; Battle: I. Noon, 54; II. Night Bombardment, 55; The Assault, 58; The Last Salute, 123; Fulfilment, 257

O. . . . . — Command of the Air, 108; The Death of the Zeppelin, 117

✠Palmer, Captain the Hon. Robert, Hants Regiment (died in the Turkish Camp of wounds received on the Tigris on January 21, 1916) — How Long, O Lord? 162

Perowne, Lieutenant Victor, Scots Guards — A Dirge, 126

✠Philipps, Captain the Hon. Colwyn, Royal Horse Guards (killed in action, May 13, 1915) — Release, 163; Racing Rhymes, 198; To Mother, 245; I Love, 253; The Barrier, 255

Plowman, Dorothy — Any Soldier's Wife, 261

Plowman, Second Lieutenant Max, West Yorkshire Regiment — When it's Over, 153

✠Ratcliffe, Lieutenant A. Victor, West Yorkshire Regiment — Optimism, 156

✠ROBERTSON, PRIVATE ALEXANDER, York and Lancaster Regiment (killed in action, July 1, 1916)	The New *Æneid*, 44; A Dream of New College, 190
✠ROBINS, CAPTAIN GEORGE U., East Yorkshire Regiment (killed in action (gassed), May 5, 1915)	The Soldier's Game, 195; Ivinghoe Hill, 205
ROSE-TROUP, CAPTAIN J. M., Queen's Regiment (prisoner of war in Germany)	What is War? 161; Harrow's Honour, 176; The Listeners, 267
SASSOON, LIEUTENANT SIEGFRIED, M.C., Royal Welsh Fusiliers	Absolution, 31; The Rear-Guard, 68
SCOTT-MONCRIEFF, CAPTAIN CHARLES, King's Own Scottish Borders	The Field of Honour, 175; Domum, 182; The Willow Tree Bough, 240; Back in Billets, 275
SHANKS, SECOND LIEUTENANT EDWARD (temporary), South Lancashire Regiment	Marching at Home: Pictures, 12; Low Germany, 242; On Account of Ill-health, 281; Good Wishes, 295
SITWELL, CAPTAIN OSBERT, Grenadier Guards	Babel, 38; Tears, 271
✠SORLEY, CAPTAIN CHARLES H., Suffolk Regiment (killed in action, October 3, 1915)	Two Sonnets, 147; To Germany, 149; A Letter from the Trenches, 178; The Army of Death, 217
✠STERLING, LIEUTENANT R. W., Royal Scots Fusiliers (killed in action, St. George's Day, 1915)	Historic Oxford, 186; The River Bathe, 199; The Bonny, Bonny Braes, 249; Last Lines, 283
✠STREETS, SERGEANT JOHN W., York and Lancaster Regiment (killed in action, July 1, 1916)	Love of Life, 24
✠TENNANT, LIEUTENANT THE HON. E. WYNDHAM, Grenadier Guards (killed in action on Western Front in September 1915)	Home Thoughts in Laventie, 9; Light after Darkness, 63; Reincarnation, 145

WEAVING, LIEUTENANT WILLOUGHBY, Royal Irish Guards	Dies Iræ, 37; Between the Trenches, 47; Birds in the Trenches, 64; The Dead, 1915, 146; Ghosts (Flanders, 1915), 220; The Warrior Month, 274; Progress, 277
WHITE, ROMA	News of Jutland, 97
✠WILKINSON, LIEUTENANT ERIC F., M.C., West Yorkshire Regiment (Leeds Rifles) (killed in action)	Rugby Football, 208
✠WINTERBOTHAM, LIEUTENANT CYRIL W., Gloucestershire Regiment (killed in action August 27, 1916)	The Cross of Wood, 159; A Christmas Prayer, 169

CONTENTS

THE MOTHER LAND

			PAGE
I.	If I Should Die	*Rupert Brooke*	3
II.	At the Wars	*Robert Nichols*	4
III.	Reverie	*William Noel Hodgson*	6
IV.	Farewell	*Robert Nichols*	7
V.	Home Thoughts in Laventie	*E. Wyndham Tennant*	9
VI.	Marching at Home: Pictures	*Edward Shanks*	12
VII.	Strange Service	*Ivor Gurney*	14

BEFORE ACTION

VIII.	Into Battle	*Julian Grenfell*	19
IX.	Before Action	*William Noel Hodgson*	22
X.	Love of Life	*John W. Streets*	24
XI.	Big Words	*Robert Graves*	25
XII.	The Approach (*Robert Nichols*):		
	1. In the Grass: Halt by the Wayside		26
	2. On the Way Up		27
	3. Nearer		28
XIII.	To the Poet before Battle	*Ivor Gurney*	30
XIV.	Absolution	*Siegfried Sassoon*	31
XV.	Better Far to Pass Away	*Richard Molesworth Dennys*	32

BATTLE PIECES

XVI.	Dies Irae	*Willoughby Weaving*	37
XVII.	Babel	*Osbert Sitwell*	38
XVIII.	In the Morning	*Patrick MacGill*	40
XIX.	Release	*William Noel Hodgson*	42
XX.	The New Æneid	*Alexander Robertson*	44
XXI.	The Road	*Gordon Alchin*	45

			PAGE
XXII.	Between the Trenches	*Willoughby Weaving*	47
XXIII.	Comrades	*Robert Nichols*	49
XXIV.	The Star-Shell	*Patrick MacGill*	53
XXV.	Battle (*Robert Nichols*):		
	1. Noon		54
	2. Night Bombardment		55
XXVI.	The Assault	*Robert Nichols*	58
XXVII.	Light after Darkness	*E. Wyndham Tennant*	63
XXVIII.	Birds in the Trenches	*Willoughby Weaving*	64
XXIX.	To a Baby found paddling near the Lines	*Herbert Asquith*	65
XXX.	The Rear-guard	*Siegfried Sassoon*	68

THE SEA AFFAIR

XXXI.	The Old Way	*Ronald Hopwood*	73
XXXII.	Song of the White Ensign	*William M. James*	78
XXXIII.	Undying Days	*William M. James*	82
XXXIV.	To a Naval Cadet	*Noel F. M. Corbett*	86
XXXV.	Lines written somewhere in the North Sea	*Noel F. M. Corbett*	88
XXXVI.	Battle of the Falkland Isles	*I. C.*	90
XXXVII.	Guns at Sea	*Imtarfa*	94
XXXVIII.	News of Jutland	*Roma White*	97

WAR IN THE AIR

XXXIX.	Eyes in the Air	*Gilbert Frankau*	105
XL.	Command of the Air	*O.*	108
XLI.	A Song of the Plane	*Gordon Alchin*	109
XLII.	Two Pictures	*Gordon Alchin*	111
XLIII.	Per Ardua ad Astra	*Gordon Alchin*	113
XLIV.	Reconnaissance	*Gordon Alchin*	114
XLV.	The Flight to Flanders	*Lessel Hutcheon*	115
XLVI.	The Death of the Zeppelin	*O.*	117

IN MEMORIAM

XLVII.	The Last Salute	*Robert Nichols*	123
XLVIII.	A Dirge	*Victor Perowne*	126
XLIX.	R. B.	*Aubrey Herbert*	128
L.	To Certain Comrades	*Ivor Gurney*	130

			PAGE
LI.	Ode to a Young Man	*Dynely Hussey*	132
LII.	Goliath and David	*Robert Graves*	134
LIII.	To R—— at Anzac	*Aubrey Herbert*	136
LIV.	To John	*William Grenfell*	139
LV.	To Charles Lister	*C. A. A.*	140

THE FUTURE HOPE

LVI.	Gifts of the Dead	*Rupert Brooke*	143
LVII.	War's Cataract	*Herbert Asquith*	144
LVIII.	Reincarnation	*E. Wyndham Tennant*	145
LIX.	The Dead, 1915	*Willoughby Weaving*	146
LX.	Two Sonnets	*Charles Hamilton Sorley*	147
LXI.	To Germany	*Charles Hamilton Sorley*	149
LXII.	If we Return	*F. W. Harvey*	150
LXIII.	A People Renewed	*F. W. Harvey*	151
LXIV.	Afterwards	*Ivor Gurney*	152
LXV.	When it's Over	*Max Plowman*	153
LXVI.	Optimism	*A. V. Ratcliffe*	156

THE CHRISTIAN SOLDIER

LXVII.	The Cross of Wood	*Cyril Winterbotham*	159
LXVIII.	What is War?	*J. M. Rose-Troup*	161
LXIX.	How long, O Lord?	*Robert Palmer*	162
LXX.	Release	*Colwyn Philipps*	163
LXXI.	In the Lower Garden	*H. S. Graham*	164
LXXII.	A Christmas Prayer	*Cyril Winterbotham*	169
LXXIII.	Holy Communion Service, Suvla Bay	*W. H. Littlejohn*	171

SCHOOL AND COLLEGE

LXXIV.	The Field of Honour	*Charles Scott-Moncrieff*	175
LXXV.	Harrow's Honour	*J. M. Rose-Troup*	176
LXXVI.	A Letter from the Trenches	*Charles Hamilton Sorley*	178
LXXVII.	Domum	*Charles Scott-Moncrieff*	182
LXXVIII.	Ave, Mater—Atque Vale	*William Noel Hodgson*	184
LXXIX.	Historic Oxford	*R. W. Sterling*	186
LXXX.	An Oxford Retrospect	*Dynely Hussey*	188
LXXXI.	A Dream of New College	*Alexander Robertson*	190

CHIVALRY OF SPORT

			PAGE
LXXXII.	The Soldier's Game	*George U. Robins*	195
LXXXIII.	Racing Rhymes	*Colwyn Philipps*	198
LXXXIV.	The River Bathe	*R. W. Sterling*	199
LXXXV.	To a Black Greyhound	*Julian Grenfell*	201
LXXXVI.	Hymn to the Wild Boar	*Julian Grenfell*	203
LXXXVII.	Ivinghoe Hill	*George U. Robins*	205
LXXXVIII.	Cricket: the Catch	*F. W. Harvey*	207
LXXXIX.	Rugby Football	*Eric Wilkinson*	208

THE GHOSTLY COMPANY

XC.	The Home-coming	*Joseph Lee*	215
XCI.	The Army of Death	*Charles Hamilton Sorley*	217
XCII.	Cha Till Maccruimein	*E. A. Mackintosh*	218
XCIII.	Ghosts (Flanders, 1915)	*Willoughby Weaving*	220
XCIV.	Easter Even	*Dynely Hussey*	221
XCV.	The Half-hour's Furlough	*Joseph Lee*	224
XCVI.	The Sleep of Death	*Harley Matthews*	227

SONGS

XCVII.	The Soldier Speaks	*F. W. Harvey*	233
XCVIII.	The Drum	*Joseph Lee*	234
XCIX.	Home-coming	*Dynely Hussey*	236
C.	In Flanders	*F. W. Harvey*	238
CI.	The Broken Heart	*Joseph Lee*	239
CII.	The Willow-tree Bough	*Charles Scott-Moncrieff*	240
CIII.	Low Germany	*Edward Shanks*	242

LOVING AND LIVING

CIV.	To Mother	*Colwyn Philipps*	245
CV.	Mother's Birthday	*H. S. Graham*	246
CVI.	The Bonny, Bonny Braes	*R. W. Sterling*	249
CVII.	Suvla Bay	*W. H. Littlejohn*	251
CVIII.	I Love	*Colwyn Philipps*	253
CIX.	To His Maid	*F. W. Harvey*	254
CX.	The Barrier	*Colwyn Philipps*	255
CXI.	Rainbow	*Dynely Hussey*	256
CXII.	Fulfilment	*Robert Nichols*	257

PAGE

CXIII. The Spirit of Womanhood (*A. L. Jenkins*):
1. Sending 259
2. Rebellion 259
3. Peace 260
CXIV. Any Soldier's Wife . . . . *Dorothy Plowman* 261

MOODS AND MEMORIES

CXV. The Listeners . . . . . *J. M. Rose-Troup* 267
CXVI. Outposts . . . . . *A. L. Jenkins* 269
CXVII. Tears . . . . . *Osbert Sitwell* 271
CXVIII. The Tryst . . . . . *A. J.* 272
CXIX. The Warrior Month . . *Willoughby Weaving* 274
CXX. Back in Billets . . . . *Charles Scott-Moncrieff* 275
CXXI. Progress . . . . . *Willoughby Weaving* 277
CXXII. The Hills . . . . . *Julian Grenfell* 278
CXXIII. On Account of Ill Health . . *Edward Shanks* 281
CXXIV. Last Lines . . . . . *R. W. Sterling* 283
CXXV. A Prayer . . . . . *W. H. Littlejohn* 284
CXXVI. The God who waits . . . . *Leslie Coulson* 285
CXXVII. Judgment . . . . . *Leslie Coulson* 288
CXXVIII. The Hospital Ship . . . . *W. H. Littlejohn* 289
CXXIX. The Rainbow . . . . . *Leslie Coulson* 291
CXXX. Escape. . . . . *Robert Graves* 293
CXXXI. Good Wishes. . . . . *Edward Shanks* 295

The Mother Land

I

If I Should Die

IF I should die, think only this of me:
That there's some corner of a foreign field
That is for ever England. There shall be
In that rich earth a richer dust concealed;
A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware,
Gave, once, her flowers to love, her ways to roam,
A body of England's, breathing English air,
Washed by the rivers, blest by suns of home.

And think, this heart, all evil shed away,
A pulse in the eternal mind, no less
Gives somewhere back the thoughts by England given;
Her sights and sounds; dreams happy as her day;
And laughter, learnt of friends; and gentleness,
In hearts at peace, under an English heaven.

BROOKE.

II

At the Wars

NOW that I am ta'en away
And may not see another day
What is it to my eye appears?
What sound rings in my stricken ears?
Not even the voice of any friend
Or eyes beloved-world-without-end,
But scenes and sounds of the country-side
In far England across the tide:
An upland field when spring's begun,
Mellow beneath the evening sun. . . .
A circle of loose and lichened wall
Over which seven red pines fall. . . .
An orchard of wizen blossoming trees
Wherein the nesting chaffinches
Begin again the self-same song
All the late April day-time long. . . .
Paths that lead a shelving course
Between the chalk scarp and the gorse
By English downs; and oh! too well
I hear the hidden, clanking bell
Of wandering sheep. . . . I see the brown
Twilight of the huge, empty down

Soon blotted out! for now a lane
Glitters with warmth of May-time rain.
And on a shooting briar I see
A yellow bird who sings to me.

O yellow-hammer, once I heard
Thy yaffle when no other bird
Could to my sunk heart comfort bring;
But now I could not have thee sing
So sharp thy note is with the pain
Of England I may not see again!
Yet sing thy song: there answereth
Deep in me a voice which saith:
"The gorse upon the twilit down,
The English loam so sunset brown,
The bowed pines and the sheep-bells' clamour,
The wet, lit lane and the yellow-hammer,
The orchard and the chaffinch song
Only to the Brave belong,
And he shall lose their joy for aye
If their price he cannot pay.
Who shall find them dearer far
Enriched by blood after long war."

ROBERT NICHOLS.

III

Reverie

AT home they see on Skiddaw
His royal purple lie,
And autumn up in Newlands
Arrayed in russet die,
Or under burning woodland
The still lake's gramarye.
And far off and grim and sable
The menace of the Gable
Lifts up his stark aloofness
Against the western sky.

At vesper-time in Durham
The level evening falls
Upon the shadowy river
That slides by ancient walls,
Where out of crannied turrets
The mellow belfry calls.
And there sleep brings forgetting
And morning no regretting,
And love is laughter-wedded
To health in happy halls.

W. N. Hodgson.

IV

Farewell

FOR the last time, maybe, upon the knoll
I stand. The eve is golden, languid, sad. . .
Day like a tragic actor plays his rôle
To the last whispered word and falls gold-clad.
I, too, take leave of all I ever had.

They shall not say I went with heavy heart:
Heavy I am, but soon I shall be free,
I love them all, but oh I now depart
A little sadly, strangely, fearfully,
As one who goes to try a mystery.

The bell is sounding down in Dedham vale:
Be still, O bell: too often standing here
When all the air was tremulous, fine and pale,
Thy golden note so calm, so still, so clear,
Out of my stony heart has struck a tear.

And now tears are not mine. I have release
From all the former and the later pain,
Like the mid sea I rock in boundless peace
Soothed by the charity of the deep-sea rain. . . .
Calm rain! Calm sea! Calm found, long sought in vain!

O bronzen pines, evening of gold and blue,
Steep mellow slope, brimmed twilit pools below,
Hushed trees, still vale dissolving in the dew,
Farewell. Farewell. There is no more to do.
We have been happy. Happy now I go.

ROBERT NICHOLS.

EXPEDITIONARY FORCE LEAVE,
1915.

V

Home Thoughts in Laventie

GREEN gardens in Laventie!
Soldiers only know the street
Where the mud is churned and splashed about
By battle-wending feet;
And yet beside one stricken house there is a glimpse of grass.
Look for it when you pass.

Beyond the church whose pitted spire
Seems balanced on a strand
Of swaying stone and tottering brick
Two roofless ruins stand,
And here behind the wreckage where the back wall should have been
We found a garden green.

The grass was never trodden on,
The little path of gravel
Was overgrown with celandine,
No other folk did travel
Along its weedy surface, but the nimble-footed mouse
Running from house to house.

So all among the vivid blades
Of soft and tender grass
We lay, nor heard the limber wheels
That pass and ever pass,
In noisy continuity until their stony rattle
Seems in itself a battle.

At length we rose up from this ease
Of tranquil happy mind,
And searched the garden's little length
A fresh pleasaunce to find;
And there, some yellow daffodils and jasmine hanging high
Did rest the tired eye.

The fairest and most fragrant
Of the many sweets we found,
Was a little bush of Daphne flower
Upon a grassy mound,
And so thick were the blossoms set and so divine the scent
That we were well content.

Hungry for spring, I bent my head,
The perfume fanned my face,
And all my soul was dancing
In that little lovely place,
Dancing with a measured step from wrecked and shattered towns
Away . . . upon the Downs.

I saw green banks of daffodil,
Slim poplars in the breeze,
Great tan-brown hares in gusty March
A-courting on the leas;
And meadows with their glittering streams, and silver scurrying dace,
Home—what a perfect place!

E. WYNDHAM TENNANT.

BELGIUM, *March*, 1916.

VI

Marching at Home

I

UNDER a grey dawn, timidly breaking,
Through the little village the men are waking,
Easing their stiff limbs and rubbing their eyes;
From my misted window I watch the sun rise.
In the middle of the village a fountain stands,
Round it the men sit, washing their red hands.
Slowly the light grows, we call the roll over,
Bring the laggards stumbling from their warm cover,
Slowly the company gathers all together
And the men and the officer look shyly at the weather.
By the left, quick march! Off the column goes.
All through the village all the windows unclose:
At every window stands a child, early waking,
To see what road the company is taking.

II

THE wind is cold and heavy
And storms are in the sky:
Our path across the heather
Goes higher and more high.

To right, the town we came from,
  To left, blue hills and sea:
The wind is growing colder,
  And shivering are we.

We drag with stiffening fingers
  Our rifles up the hill.
The path is steep and tangled,
  But leads to Flanders still.

EDWARD SHANKS.

VII

Strange Service

LITTLE did I dream, England, that you bore me
Under the Cotswold Hills beside the water meadows
To do you dreadful service, here, beyond your borders
And your enfolding seas.

I was a dreamer ever, and bound to your dear service
Meditating deep, I thought on your secret beauty,
As through a child's face one may see the clear spirit
Miraculously shining.

Your hills not only hills, but friends of mine and kindly,
Your tiny knolls and orchards hidden beside the river
Muddy and strongly flowing, with shy and tiny streamlets
Safe in its bosom.

Now these are memories only, and your skies and rushy sky-pools
Fragile mirrors easily broken by moving airs;
But deep in my heart for ever goes on your daily being
And uses consecrate.

Think on me too, O Mother, who wrest my soul to serve
you
In strange and fearful ways beyond your encircling waters;
None but you can know my heart, its tears and sacrifice,
None, but you, repay.

IVOR GURNEY.

Before Action

VIII

Into Battle

THE naked earth is warm with spring,
And with green grass and bursting trees
Leans to the sun's gaze glorying,
And quivers in the sunny breeze;
And life is colour and warmth and light,
And a striving evermore for these;
And he is dead who will not fight;
And who dies fighting has increase.

The fighting man shall from the sun
Take warmth, and life from the glowing earth;
Speed with the light-foot winds to run,
And with the trees to newer birth;
And find, when fighting shall be done,
Great rest, and fullness after dearth.

All the bright company of Heaven
Hold him in their high comradeship,
The Dog-Star, and the Sisters Seven,
Orion's Belt and sworded hip.

The woodland trees that stand together,
They stand to him each one a friend;
They gently speak in the windy weather;
They guide to valley and ridge's end.

The kestrel hovering by day,
And the little owls that call by night,
Bid him be swift and keen as they,
As keen of ear, as swift of sight.

The blackbird sings to him, "Brother, brother,
If this be the last song you shall sing,
Sing well, for you may not sing another;
Brother, sing."

In dreary, doubtful, waiting hours,
Before the brazen frenzy starts,
The horses show him nobler powers;
O patient eyes, courageous hearts!

And when the burning moment breaks,
And all things else are out of mind,
And only joy of battle takes
Him by the throat, and makes him blind,

Through joy and blindness he shall know
Not caring much to know, that still
Nor lead nor steel shall reach him, so
That it be not the Destined Will.

The thundering line of battle stands,
And in the air death moans and sings;
But Day shall clasp him with strong hands,
And Night shall fold him in soft wings.

JULIAN GRENFELL.

IX

Before Action

BY all the glories of the day
And the cool evening's benison,
By that last sunset touch that lay
Upon the hills when day was done,
By beauty lavishly outpoured
And blessings carelessly received,
By all the days that I have lived
Make me a soldier, Lord.

By all of all man's hopes and fears,
And all the wonders poets sing,
The laughter of unclouded years,
And every sad and lovely thing;
By the romantic ages stored
With high endeavour that was his,
By all his mad catastrophes
Make me a man, O Lord.

I, that on my familiar hill
Saw with uncomprehending eyes
A hundred of Thy sunsets spill
Their fresh and sanguine sacrifice,

Ere the sun swings his noonday sword
  Must say good-bye to all of this;—
By all delights that I shall miss,
  Help me to die, O Lord.

W. N. Hodgson.

June 29th, 1916.

X

Love of Life

REACH out thy hands, thy spirit's hands, to me
And pluck the youth, the magic from my heart—
Magic of dreams whose sensibility
Is plumèd like the light; visions that start
Mad pressure in the blood; desire that thrills
The soul with mad delight: to yearning wed
All slothfulness of life; draw from its bed
The soul of dawn across the twilight hills.
Reach out thy hands, O spirit, till I feel
That I am fully thine; for I shall live
In the proud consciousness that thou dost give,
And if thy twilight fingers round me steal
And draw me unto death—thy votary
Am I, O Life; reach out thy hands to me!

JOHN W. STREETS.

XI

Big Words

I'VE whined of coming death, but now, no more!
It's weak and most ungracious. For, say I,
Though still a boy if years are counted, why!
I've lived those years from roof to cellar-floor,
And feel, like grey-beards touching their fourscore,
Ready, so soon as the need comes, to die:
And I'm satisfied.
For winning confidence in those quiet days
Of peace, poised sickly on the precipice side
Of Lliwedd crag by Snowdon, and in war
Finding it firmlier with me than before;
Winning a faith in the wisdom of God's ways
That once I lost, finding it justified
Even in this chaos; winning love that stays
And warms the heart like wine at Easter-tide;
Having earlier tried
False loves in plenty; oh! my cup of praise
Brims over, and I know I'll feel small sorrow,
Confess no sins and make no weak delays
If death ends all and I must die to-morrow."
But on the firestep, waiting to attack,
He cursed, prayed, sweated, wished the proud words back.

ROBERT GRAVES.

XII

The Approach

1. In the Grass: Halt by the Wayside

IN my tired, helpless body
I feel my sunk heart ache;
But suddenly, loudly
The far, the great guns shake.

Is it sudden terror
Burdens my heart? My hand
Flies to my head. I listen. . .
And do not understand.

Is death so near, then?
From this blazing light,
Do I plunge suddenly
Into vortex? Night?

Guns again! the quiet
Shakes at the vengeful voice. . . .
It is terrible pleasure.
I do not fear; I rejoice.

2. *On the Way Up*

The battery grides and jingles,
Mile succeeds to mile;
Shaking the noonday sunshine,
The guns lunge out a while
And then are still a while.

We amble along the highway;
The reeking, powdery dust
Ascends and cakes our faces,
With a striped, sweaty crust.

Under the still sky's violet
The heat throbs in the air. . . .
The white road's dusty radiance,
Assumes a dark glare.

With a head hot and heavy,
And eyes that cannot rest,
And a black heart burning
In a stifled breast,

I sit in the saddle,
I feel the road unroll,
And keep my senses straightened
Toward to-morrow's goal.

There over unknown meadows,
Which we must reach at last,
Day and night thunders
A black and chilly blast.

Heads forget heaviness,
Hearts forget spleen,
For by that mighty winnowing
Being is blown clean.

Light in the eyes again,
Strength in the hand,
A spirit dares, dies, forgives
And can understand.

And best! Love comes back again
After grief and shame,
And along the wind of death
Throws a clean flame!

. . . . .

The battery grides and jingles;
Mile succeeds to mile;
Suddenly battering the silence
The guns burst out a while.

. . . . .

I lift my head and smile.

3. *Nearer*

Nearer and ever nearer. . . .
My body tired but tense
Hovers 'twixt vague pleasure
And tremulous confidence.

Arms to have and to use them,
And a soul to be made
Worthy if not worthy;
If afraid, unafraid!

To endure for a little,
To endure and have done:
Men I love about me,
Over me the sun!

And should at last suddenly
Fly the speeding death:
The four great quarters of heaven
Receive this little breath.

ROBERT NICHOLS.

XIII

To the Poet before Battle

NOW, youth, the hour of thy dread passion comes;
Thy lovely things must all be laid away;
And thou, as others, must face the riven day
Unstirred by rattle of the rolling drums
Or bugles' strident cry. When mere noise numbs
The sense of being, the sick soul doth sway,
Remember thy great craft's honour, that they may say
Nothing in shame of poets. Then the crumbs
Of praise the little versemen joyed to take
Shall be forgotten; then they must know we are,
For all our skill in words, equal in might
And strong of mettle as those we honoured. Make
The name of poet terrible in just war,
And like a crown of honour upon the fight.

IVOR GURNEY.

XIV

Absolution

THE anguish of the earth absolves our eyes
Till beauty shines in all that we can see.
War is our scourge; yet war has made us wise,
And, fighting for our freedom, we are free.

Horror of wounds and anger at the foe,
And loss of things desired; all those must pass.
We are the happy legion, for we know
Time's but a golden wind that shakes the grass.

There was an hour when we were loth to part
From life we longed to share no less than others.
Now, having claimed his heritage of heart,
What need we more, my comrades and my brothers?

SIEGFRIED SASSOON.

XV

Better Far to Pass Away

BETTER far to pass away
While the limbs are strong and young,
Ere the ending of the day,
Ere youth's lusty song be sung.
Hot blood pulsing through the veins,
Youth's high hope a burning fire,
Young men needs must break the chains
That hold them from their hearts' desire.

My friends the hills, the sea, the sun,
The winds, the woods, the clouds, the trees—
How feebly, if my youth were done,
Could I, an old man, relish these!
With laughter, then, I'll go to greet
What Fate has still in store for me,
And welcome Death if we should meet,
And bear him willing company.

My share of fourscore years and ten
I'll gladly yield to any man,
And take no thought of "where" or "when,"
Contented with my shorter span.

For I have learned what love may be,
And found a heart that understands,
And known a comrade's constancy,
And felt the grip of friendly hands.

Come when it may, the stern decree
For me to leave the cheery throng
And quit the sturdy company
Of brothers that I work among.
No need for me to look askance,
Since no regret my prospect mars.
My day was happy—and perchance
The coming night is full of stars.

RICHARD MOLESWORTH DENNYS.

Battle Pieces

XVI

Dies Irae

THE land went up in fire and curdled smoke,
And the flames flickered on the flowing blood,
And all the hot air thick with thunder stood
Shaken, as oxen shake beneath a yoke
And rattle all their harness: laughter broke,
A horrid laughter, from the steaming flood,
And the unpent cry of broken womanhood
Mounted to God and hid him like a cloak.

Red mortal wrath of man, that so he dies
For indignation just, and lightly slays,
Sealing so bloodily his length of days,
Regarding not the splendid sacrifice,
Holding the gift of life below God's price
To his eternal glory and God's praise.

WILLOUGHBY WEAVING.

IN FLANDERS.

XVII

Babel

Therefore is the name of it called Babel

AND still we stood and stared far down
Into that ember-glowing town
Which every shaft and shock of fate
Had shorn unto its base. Too late
Came carelessly Serenity.

Now torn and broken houses gaze
On to the rat-infested maze
That once sent up rose-silver haze
To mingle through eternity.

The outlines, once so strongly wrought,
Of city walls, are now a thought
Or jest unto the dead who fought . . .
Foundation for futurity.

The shimmering sands where once there played
Children with painted pail and spade
Are drearly desolate,—afraid
To meet Night's dark humanity,

Whose silver cool remakes the dead,
And lays no blame on any head
For all the havoc, fire, and lead,
That fell upon us suddenly.

When all we came to know as good
Gave way to Evil's fiery flood,
And monstrous myths of iron and blood
Seem to obscure God's clarity.

Deep sunk in sin, this tragic star
Sinks deeper still, and wages war
Against itself; strewn all the seas
With victims of a world disease.
—And we are left to drink the lees
Of Babel's direful prophecy.

OSBERT SITWELL.

XVIII

In the Morning

(Loos, 1915)

THE firefly haunts were lighted yet,
As we scaled the top of the parapet;
But the east grew pale to another fire,
As our bayonets gleamed by the foeman's wire;
And the sky was tinged with gold and grey,
And under our feet the dead men lay,
Stiff by the loop-holed barricade;
Food of the bomb and the hand-grenade;
Still in the slushy pool and mud—
Ah, the path we came was a path of blood,
When we went to Loos in the morning.

A little grey church at the foot of a hill,
With powdered glass on the window-sill—
The shell-scarred stone and the broken tile,
Littered the chancel, nave, and aisle—
Broken the altar and smashed the pyx,
And the rubble covered the crucifix;
This we saw when the charge was done,
And the gas-clouds paled in the rising sun,
As we entered Loos in the morning.

The dead men lay on the shell-scarred plain,
Where Death and the Autumn held their reign—
Like banded ghosts in the heavens grey
The smoke of the powder paled away;
Where riven and rent the spinney trees
Shivered and shook in the sullen breeze,
And there, where the trench through the graveyard wound
The dead men's bones stuck over the ground
By the road to Loos in the morning.

The turret towers that stood in the air,
Sheltered a foeman sniper there—
They found, who fell to the sniper's aim,
A field of death on the field of fame;
And stiff in khaki the boys were laid
To the sniper's toll at the barricade,
But the quick went clattering through the town,
Shot at the sniper and brought him down,
As we entered Loos in the morning.

The dead men lay on the cellar stair,
Toll of the bomb that found them there.
In the street men fell as a bullock drops,
Sniped from the fringe of Hulluch copse.
And the choking fumes of the deadly shell
Curtained the place where our comrades fell.
This we saw when the charge was done
And the east blushed red to the rising sun
In the town of Loos in the morning.

PATRICK MACGILL.

XIX

Release

(Composed while marching to Rest-camp after severe Fighting at Loos)

A LEAPING wind from England,
The skies without a stain,
Clean cut against the morning
Slim poplars after rain,
The foolish noise of sparrows
And starlings in a wood—
After the grime of battle
We know that these are good.

Death whining down from heaven,
Death roaring from the ground,
Death stinking in the nostril,
Death shrill in every sound,
Doubting we charged and conquered—
Hopeless we struck and stood;
Now when the fight is ended
We know that it was good.

We that have seen the strongest
  Cry like a beaten child,
The sanest eyes unholy,
  The cleanest hands defiled,
We that have known the heart-blood
  Less than the lees of wine,
We that have seen men broken,
  We know man is divine.

W. N. Hodgson.

XX

The New Æneid

THESE waters saw the gilded galleys come
From the red east: the oarsmen cast their gaze
Upon its brightness, and recalled the blaze
With sorrowing hearts of once proud Ilium.
Men without homes they were, yet unafraid
Westward they fared some far-off home to seek,
Their sires, whose power revenged them on the Greek,
And round these seas a mighty empire made.
Ah, strong immortal rowers, that never were!
Leader that lived not, deathless in the song
Sung to Rome's glory,—'mid a martial throng,
I bless the answer to an ancient prayer,
Clear-eyed to see what once was partly hid,
The splendid pageant of the Æneid.

ALEXANDER ROBERTSON.

IN GALLIPOLI.

XXI

The Road

THEN first the paving of the Road
Rang to the tread of the marching Roman,
And Cæsar's legions seaward strode
To find a yet unmastered foeman,—
Full many a curse, of ancient flavour,
Rolled far along the muddy Way;
A curse upon the highway's paver,
Whose echoes linger to this day!

A thousand years—(when England lay
Beneath the heel of the Norman raider):—
The cobbles of the age-worn Way
Echo the march of the mailed Crusader:
Whilst many an oath, of pious fervour,
Between their chaunt and roundelay,
Gives proof to any close observer,
That men are little changed to-day!

Again a thousand years—again
The ancient frontier Road enslaving,
Come horse and cannon, motor-train:—
All sweep along the narrow paving.

A wondrous change, you say? but listen!
Listen to the words they say!
What matter cannon, petrol, piston?
The *men* are just the same to-day!

GORDON ALCHIN.

XXII

Between the Trenches

HOW strangely did you break upon
That sudden land beyond life's veil?
A moment did your spirit fail,
As mine when first I knew you gone
The last dark journey, saw your clay
So vacant, loveless, borne away,
And the features, that I loved to scan,
The same but of another man
Unknown—a bright dream all undone.

What stranger did the bearers lift
In their soiled stretcher lightly laid
Where I had seen you fall adrift
From life—had time to be afraid?
—That, all of you that had breathed and moved,
That, none of you that lived and loved,
A husk that so I seemed to hate
For claiming still its lost inmate,
A false pretence, a solid shade.

Shadow more solid, but less real
  Than love and laughter whence it fell
Across my path with mute appeal
  And served your spirit's purpose well—
So well that even I could see
It indistinguishably thee,
  Till you had left it like a sheath
  With laughter in the hands of death,
And left me gay, not miserable.

Ah, love had never more to loose:
  If certain love had less to tell
Then might I in despair's excuse
  Bid you a hopeless, vain farewell,
And by the stranger's grave have wept
A solemn while, and sadly kept
  In mind his features filled not through
  With breathing life, love living, you
Who smiled upon his burial.

WILLOUGHBY WEAVING.

XXIII

Comrades

BEFORE, before he was aware
The "Verey" light had risen . . . on the air
It hung glistening. . . .
And he could not stay his hand
From moving to the barbed wire's broken strand.
A rifle cracked.
He fell.
Night waned. He was alone. A heavy shell
Whispered itself passing high, high overhead.
His wound was wet to his hand: for still it bled
On to the glimmering ground.
Then with a slow, vain smile his wound he bound,
Knowing, of course, he'd not see home again—
Home, whose thought he put away.
His men
Whispered, "Where's Mister Gates?" "Out on the wire."
"I'll get him," said one. . . .
Dawn blinked and the fire
Of the Germans heaved up and down the line.
"Stand to!"
Too late! "I'll get him." "Oh the swine,

When we might get him in yet safe and whole!"
"Corp'ral didn't see un fall out on patrol
Or he'd a got un." "Ssssh". . .
"No talking there."
A whisper: "'A went down at the last flare."
Meanwhile the Maxims toc-toc-tocked: their swish
Of bullets told death lurked against the wish.
No hope for him!
His corporal, as one shamed,
Vainly and helplessly his ill-luck blamed.

. . . .

Then Gates slowly saw the morn
Break in a rosy peace through the lone thorn
By which he lay, and felt the dawn-wind pass
Whispering through the pallid, stalky grass
Of No-Man's Land. . . .
And the tears came
Scaldingly sweet, more lovely than a flame.
He closed his eyes: he thought of home
And grit his teeth. He knew no help could come. . . .

. . . . .

The silent sun over the earth held sway,
Occasional rifles cracked, and far away
A heedless speck, a 'plane, slid on alone
Like a fly traversing a cliff of stone.

"I must get back," said Gates aloud, and heaved
At his body. But it lay bereaved
Of any power. He could not wait till night. . . .
And he lay still. Blood swam across his sight.

Then with a groan:
"No luck ever. Well! I must die alone."

Occasional rifles cracked. A cloud that shone,
Gold-rimmed, blackened the sun and then was gone. . . .
The sun still smiled. The grass sang in its play.
Some one whistled, "Over the hills and far away."
Gates watched silently the swift, swift sun
Burning his life before it was begun. . . .

Suddenly he heard Corporal Timmins' voice: "Now, then,
'Urry up with that tea."
"Hi Ginger!" "Bill." His men!
Timmins and Jones and Wilkinson ("the bard")
And Hughes and Simpson. It was hard
Not to see them: Wilkinson, stubby grim,
With his "No, sir," "Yes, sir," and the slim
Simpson, "Indeed, sir?" [while it seemed he winked
Because his smiling left eye always blinked]
And Corporal Timmins, straight and blonde and wise,
With his quiet-scanning, level, hazel eyes,
And all the others . . . tunics that didn't fit. . . .
A dozen different sorts of eyes. Oh, it
Was hard to lie there! Yet he must. But no:
"I've got to die. I'll get to them. I'll go."

Inch by inch he fought, breathless and mute,
Dragging his carcase like a famished brute. . . .
His head was hammering and his eyes were dim,
A bloody sweat seemed to ooze out of him

And freeze along his spine . . . then he'd lie still
Before another effort of his will
Took him one nearer yard.

. . . . .

The parapet was reached.
He could not rise to it. A look-out screeched,
"Mr. Gates!"
Three figures in one breath
Leaped up. Two figures fell in toppling death;
And Gates was lifted in. "Who's hit?" said he.
"Timmins and Jones." "Why did they that for me?
I'm gone already!" Gently they laid him prone
And silently watched.
He twitched. They heard him moan,
"Why for me?" His eyes roamed round and none replied.
"I see it was alone I should have died."
They shook their heads. Then, "Is the doctor here?"
"He's comin', sir, he's hurryin', no fear."
"No good. . . .
Lift me." They lifted him.
He smiled and held his arms out to the dim,
And in a moment passed beyond their ken,
Hearing him whisper, "O my men, my men!"

ROBERT NICHOLS.

IN HOSPITAL, LONDON,
Autumn, 1915.

XXIV

The Star-shell

(Loos)

A STAR-SHELL holds the sky beyond
Shell-shivered Loos, and drops
In million sparkles on a pond
That lies by Hulluch copse.

A moment's brightness in the sky,
To vanish at a breath,
And die away, as soldiers die
Upon the wastes of death.

PATRICK MACGILL.

XXV

Battle

1. Noon

IT is midday; the deep trench glares. . . .
A buzz and blaze of flies. . . .
The hot wind puffs the giddy airs. . . .
The great sun rakes the skies.

No sound in all the stagnant trench
Where forty standing men
Endure the sweat and grit and stench,
Like cattle in a pen.

Sometimes a sniper's bullet whirs
Or twangs the whining wire,
Sometimes a soldier sighs and stirs
As in hell's frying fire.

From out a high, cool cloud descends
An aeroplane's far moan,
The sun strikes down, the thin cloud rends. . . .
The black speck travels on.

And sweating, dizzied, isolate
In the hot trench beneath,
We bide the next shrewd move of fate
Be it of life or death.

2. *Night Bombardment*

Softly in the silence the evening rain descends. . . .
The soft wind lifts the rain-mist, flurries it, and spends
Itself in mournful sighs, drifting from field to field,
Soaking the draggled sprays which the low hedges wield
As they labour in the wet and the load of the wind.
The last light is dimming. Night comes on behind.

I hear no sound but the wind and the rain,
And trample of horses, loud and lost again
Where the wagons in the mist rumble dimly on
Bringing more shell.
The last gleam is gone.
It is not day or night; only the mists unroll
And blind with their sorrow the sight of my soul.
I hear the wind weeping in the hollow overhead:
She goes searching for the forgotten dead
Hidden in the hedges or trodden into muck
Under the trenches or maybe limply stuck
Somewhere in the branches of a high, lonely tree—
He was a sniper once. They never found his body.

I see the mist drifting. I hear the wind, the rain,
And on my clammy face the oozed breath of the slain

Seems to be blowing. Almost I have heard
In the shuddering drift the lost dead's last word:
Go home, go home, go to my house,
Knock at the door, knock hard, arouse
My wife and the children—that you must do—
What d' you say?—Tell the children too—
Knock at the door, knock hard, and arouse
The living. Say: the dead won't come back to this house.
Oh . . . but it's cold—I soak in the rain—
Shrapnel found me—I shan't go home again.
No, not home again—the mourning voices trail
Away into rain, into darkness . . . the pale
Soughing of the night drifts on in between.

The Voices were as if the dead had never been.

O melancholy heavens, O melancholy fields!
The glad, full darkness grows complete and shields
Me from your appeal.

With a terrible delight
I hear far guns low like oxen, at the night.

Flames disrupt the sky. The work is begun.
"Action!" My guns crash, flame, rock, and stun
Again and again. Soon the soughing night
Is loud with their clamour and leaps with their light.

The imperative chorus rises sonorous and fell:
My heart glows lighted as by fires of hell,

Sharply I pass the terse orders down.
The guns stun and rock. The hissing rain is blown
Athwart the hurtling shell that shrilling, shrilling goes
Away into the dark to burst a cloud of rose
Over their trenches.

A pause: I stand and see
Lifting into the night like founts incessantly,
The pistol-lights' pale spores upon the glimmering air. . . .
Under them furrowed trenches empty, pallid, bare. . . .
And rain snowing trenchward ghostly and white,
O dead in the hedges, sleep ye well to-night!

ROBERT NICHOLS.

XXVI

The Assault

THE beating of the guns grows louder.
"Not long, boys, now."
My heart burns whiter, fearfuller, prouder;
Hurricanes grow
As guns redouble their fire.
Through the shaken periscope peeping
I glimpse their wire:
Black earth, fountains of earth rise, leaping,
Spouting like shocks of meeting waves.
Death's fountains are playing,
Shells like shrieking birds rush over;
Crash and din rises higher.
A stream of lead raves
Over us from the left . . . (we safe under cover!)
Crash. Reverberation. Crash!
Acrid smoke billowing. Flash upon flash.
Black smoke drifting. The German line
Vanishes in confusion, smoke. Cries, and cry
Of our men, "Gah! yer swine,
You're for it," die
In a hurricane of shell. . . .

One cry;
"We're comin' soon! look out!"
There is opened hell
Over there. Fragments fly,
Rifles and bits of men whirled at the sky:
Dust, smoke, thunder. A sudden bout
Of machine-guns chattering. . . .
And redoubled battering
As if in fury at their daring. . . .

No good staring.

Time soon now . . . home . . . house on a sunlit hill. . . .

Gone like a flickered page.
Time soon now . . . zero . . . will engage . . .

A sudden thrill.
"Fix bayonets."
Gods! we have our fill
Of fear, hysteria, exultation, rage—
Rage to kill. . . .

My heart burns hot, whiter and whiter,
Contracts tighter and tighter,
Until I stifle with the will
Long forged, now used—
(Though utterly strained)
O pounding heart,
Baffled, confused,

Heart panged, head singing dizzily pained—
To do my part.

Blindness a moment. Sick.
There the men are.
Bayonets ready: click!
Time goes quick;
A stumbled prayer . . . somehow a blazing star
In a blue night . . . where?
Again prayer.
The tongue trips. Start:
How's time? Soon now. Two minutes or less.
The guns' fury mounting higher.
Their utmost. I lift a silent hand. Unseen I bless
Those hearts will follow me.
And beautifully
Now beautifully my will grips.
Soul calm and round and filmed and white!

A shout! "Men, no such order as retire!"
I nod.
The whistle's twixt my lips. . . .
I catch
A wan, worn smile at me.
Dear men!
The pale wrist-watch. . . .
The quiet hand ticks on amid the din.
The guns again
Rise to a last fury, to a rage, a lust:
Kill! Pound! Kill! Pound! Pound!

Now comes the thrust,
My part . . . dizziness . . . will . . . but trust
These men. The great guns rise.
Their fury seems to burst the earth and skies!

They—lift!

Gather, heart, all thoughts that drift;
Be steel, soul.
Compress thyself
Into a round, bright whole.

I cannot speak.

Time! Time!

I hear my whistle shriek
Between teeth set,
I fling an arm up,
Scramble up the grime
Over the parapet!

I'm up. Go on.
Something meets us.
Head down into the storm that greets us.
A wail!
Lights. Blurr. Gone.
On, on. Lead. Lead. Hail.
Spatter. Whirr. Whirr.

"Toward that patch of brown,
Direction left." Bullets: a stream.
Devouring thought crying in a dream;
Men, crumpled, going down. . . .
Go on. Go.
Deafness, Numbness. The loudening tornado
Bullets. Mud. Stumbling and skating.
My voice's strangled shout:—
"Steady pace, boys!"
The still light: gladness.
"Look, sir, look out!—"
Ha! Ha! Bunched figures waiting.
Revolver levelled: quick!
Flick! Flick!
Red as blood.
Germans. Germans.
Good! Oh, good!

Cool madness.

ROBERT NICHOLS.

1916.

Note.—(1) "Zero" is the hour agreed upon by the Staff when the infantry are to go over the parapet of the trench and advance to the attack. (2) Guns are said to "lift when, after pounding the front line of the enemy, they lengthen their range and set up a barrier of fire behind his front line to prevent supports moving up. Our infantry then advance.

XXVII

Light after Darkness

ONCE more the Night, like some great dark drop-scene
Eclipsing horrors for a brief *entr'acte,*
Descends, lead-weighty. Now the space between,
Fringed with the eager eyes of men, is racked
By spark-tailed lights, curvetting far and high,
Swift smoke-flecked coursers, raking the black sky.

And as each sinks in ashes grey, one more
Rises to fall, and so through all the hours
They strive like petty empires by the score,
Each confident of its success and powers,
And, hovering at its zenith, each will show
Pale, rigid faces, lying dead, below.

There shall they lie, tainting the innocent air,
Until the dawn, deep veiled in mournful grey,
Sadly and quietly shall lay them bare,
The broken heralds of a doleful day.

E. Wyndham Tennant.

Hulluch Road,
October 1915.

XXVIII

Birds in the Trenches

YE fearless birds that live and fly where men
Can venture not and live, that even build
Your nests where oft the searching shrapnel shrilled
And conflict rattled like a serpent, when
The hot guns thundered further, and from his den
The little machine-gun spat, and men fell piled
In long-swept lines, as when a scythe has thrilled,
And tall corn tumbled ne'er to rise again.

Ye slight ambassadors twixt foe and foe,
Small parleyers of peace where no peace is,
Sweet disregarders of man's miseries
And his most murderous methods, winging slow
About your perilous nests—we thank you, so
Unconscious of sweet domesticities.

WILLOUGHBY WEAVING.

XXIX

To a Baby found paddling near the Lines

HAIL! O Baby of the May
In the bubbling river-bed,
Playing where the cannon play,
With the shrapnel overhead!
Sparkling in and flashing out
Through the eddies and the shallows,
With your feet among the trout,
And your head among the swallows;
While the wag-tails on the daisies
Lead you in the minuet,
Twinkling through the flow'ry mazes,
Baby, do you quite forget
That, with shrapnel overhead,
Other babes are put to bed?

Baby, may the buttercup,
When you tumble, pick you up;
If you fall beside the willow,
Lilies rise to be your pillow!

In the winter should you go
Straying far without a rest,
Down beneath the drifting snow
May you be the mouse's guest;
May the bull-frog be your Knight,
And the tit your Templar true!
May the fairy guide you right
Wandering through a misty land,
At the crossings of the dew,
With the rainbow in her hand!
Should you fall from branches high
And go tumbling down the sky,
May the heron in the air
Take you floating on his wings,
And the cloudlets be your stair,
Over palaces of kings:
Riding high above the wold,
Larks your sentinels shall be,
Challenging with tongues of gold
Those who try to cage the free!

So, philosopher of May,
With my blessing go your way!
If you win such friends as these
You need never have a care,
Cannon you may safely tease,
And may juggle, at your ease,
With the whizzbang in the air:

Though the world be full of sadness,
You may still have fun and gladness,
And be happy for a day,
Playing where the cannon play.

HERBERT ASQUITH.

XXX

The Rear-guard

(Hindenburg Line, April, 1917)

GROPING along the tunnel step by step,
He winked his prying torch with patching glare
From side to side, and sniffed the unwholesome air.

Tins, bottles, boxes, shapes too vague to know,—
A mirror smashed, the mattress from a bed;
And he, exploring, fifty feet below
The rosy gloom of battle overhead.

Tripping, he grabbed the wall; saw some one lie
Humped and asleep, half-hidden by a rug;
And stooped to give the sleeper's arm a tug.
"I'm looking for Headquarters."
No reply. . . .

"God blast your neck" (for days *he'd* had no sleep),
"Get up and guide me through this stinking place."
Then, with a savage kick at the silent heap,
He flashed his beam across a livid face

Horribly glaring up; and the eyes yet wore
Agony dying hard ten days before;
And twisted fingers clutched a blackening wound.

. . . .

Alone, he staggered on until he found
Dawn's ghost, that filtered down a shafted stair
To the dazed, muttering creatures underground,
Who hear the boom of shells in muffled sound.
At last, with sweat of horror in his hair,
He climbed through darkness to the twilight air,
Unloading hell behind him, step by step.

SIEGFRIED SASSOON.

The Sea Affair

XXXI

The Old Way

"I deeply regret to report the loss of H.M. ships. . . ."—*Sir John Jellicoe's Despatch* (*"The Times," July 7th,* 1916).

THERE'S a sea that lies uncharted far beyond the setting sun,
And a gallant fleet was sailing there whose fighting days are done,
Sloop and galleon, brig and pinnace, all the rigs you never met,
Fighting frigate, grave three-decker with their snowy canvas set;
Dozed and dreamed, when, on a sudden, ev'ry sail began to swell,
For the breeze had spoken strangers, with a stirring tale to tell,
And a thousand eager voices flung the challenge out to sea:
"Come they hither in the old way, in the only way that's free?"

And the flying breeze called softly: "In the old way,
Through the winters and the waters of the North,

They have waited, ah the waiting! in the old way,
Strong and patient, from the Pentlands to the Forth.
There was fog to blind and baffle off the headlands,
There were gales to beat the worst that ever blew,
But they took it, as they found it, in the old way,
And I know it often helped to think of you."

'Twas a frigate, under stun-sails, as she gently gathered way
Spoke in jerks, like all the frigates, who have little time to stay:
"We'd to hurry, under Nelson, thank my timbers I was tough,
For he worked us as he loved us, and he never had enough.
Are the English mad as ever? Were the frigates just as few?
(Will their sheets be always stranding, ere the rigging's rove anew?)
Just as Saxon slow at starting, just as weirdly wont to win?
Had they frigates out and watching? Did they pass the signals in?"

And the laughing Breeze made answer: "In the old way;
You should see the little cruisers spread and fly,
Peering over the horizon, in the old way,
And a seaplane up and wheeling in the sky.
When the wireless snapped 'The enemy is sighted,'
If his accents were comparatively new,
Why, the sailor-men were cheering, in the old way,
So I naturally smiled, and thought of you."

Then a courtly voice and stately from a tall three-decker came—
She'd the manners of a monarch and a story in her name:
"We'd a winter gale at even, and my shrouds are aching yet,
It was more than time for reefing when the upper sails were set.
So we chased in woful weather, till we closed in failing light,
Then we fought them, as we caught them, just as Hawke had bid us fight;
And we swept the sea by sunrise, clear and free beyond a doubt.
Was it thus the matter ended when the enemy was out?"

Cried the Breeze: "They fought and followed in the old way,
For they raced to make a record all the while,
With a knot to veer and haul on, in the old way,
That had never even met the measured mile—
And the guns were making merry in the twilight.
That the enemy was victor may be true,
Still—he hurried into harbour—in the old way—
And I wondered if he'd ever heard of you."

Came a gruff and choking chuckle, and a craft as black as doom
Lumbered laughing down to leeward, as the bravest gave her room.

"Set 'un blazin', good your Lordships, for the tide be
makin' strong,
Proper breeze to fan a fireship, set 'un drivin' out along!
'Tis the 'Torch,' wi' humble duty, from Lord Howard
'board the 'Ark,'
We'm a laughin'-stock to Brixham, but a terror after dark.
Hold an' bilge a-nigh to burstin', pitch and sulphur, tar an'
all,
Was it so, my dear, they'm fashioned for my Lord High
Admiral?"

Cried the Breeze: "You'd hardly know it from the old
way
(Gloriana, did you waken at the fight?).
Stricken shadows, scared and flying in the old way
From the swift destroying spectres of the night,
There were some that steamed and scattered south for
safety,
From the mocking western echo 'Where be tu?'
There were some that—got the message—in the old way,
And the flashes in the darkness spoke of you."

There's a wondrous Golden Harbour, far beyond the set-
ing sun,
Where a gallant ship may anchor when her fighting days
are done,
Free from tempest, rock and battle, toil and tumult safely
o'er,
Where the breezes murmur softly and there's peace for
evermore.

They have climbed the last horizon, they are standing in
from sea,
And the Pilot makes the Haven where a ship is glad to be:
Comes at last the glorious greeting, strangely new and ages
old,
See the sober grey is shining like the Tudor green and gold!

And the waiting jibs are hoisted, in the old way,
As the guns begin to thunder down the line;
Hear the silver trumpets calling, in the old way!
Over all the silken pennons float and shine.
"Did you voyage all unspoken, small and lonely?
Or with fame, the happy fortune of the few?
So you win the Golden Harbour, in the old way,
There's the old sea welcome waiting there for you."

RONALD HOPWOOD.

XXXII

Song of the White Ensign[1]

THEY made an ('twas in eighteen sixty-four) Order in Council
That gave me my proud position—the sign of a man-of-war,
And there isn't a tropic island or a bay where the anchors hold
But knows that I fly for Freedom and Honour worth more than gold.

Tens of thousands pay homage, as they raise me with loving hands
And free my soul in the morning to the drums of a hundred bands;
And thousands again salute me as the sun sinks down in the west,
For my Lords have decreed that the sun and I go down together to rest.

[1] As the ensign is hoisted in the morning, the band plays the National Anthem and all officers and men on deck face the ensign and salute. As the ensign is hauled down at sunset, the bugles sound the "Sunset call" and all officers and men on deck face the ensign and salute. The white ensign is laid over the coffins of naval men during funerals.

I flaunt my head in the breezes that the ice-bound Pole sends forth
As my halliards curse and chatter in the hail-swept frozen North;
And there's never an ocean steamer or his mate with t'gallant yard
But dip their colours in passing to show me their due regard.

I appeared off the Rio de Oro and secured the Atlantic trade,[1]
I showed off the Isle of Fernandez and saved the Pacific from raid;[2]
From barren Perim to Delgado, there isn't a creek or bay[3]
But knows of the power behind me and the price that my enemies pay.

I drooped in the Karun River, but my head wasn't hung for shame;
I prayed for the winds to gather so the Arabs might chant my fame;[4]
From Java to Gulf of Aden, from Frisco to Sea of Timor,
There's joy in the hearts of thousands when my colours are seen off shore.

[1] H.M.S. *Highflyer* defeated *Kaiser Wilhelm.*
[2] Sinking of the *Dresden.*
[3] *Königsberg,* etc.
[4] Mesopotamia.

They scarred me and pocked my beauty with the bursts of their well-aimed shell,
When they found me showing my colour to the westward of Coronel;
I hated being torn and tattered; they gave me no time to mend,
But they saw my honour untarnished, for my halliards held to the end.

I covered the sleeping corpses, for they slept there for my sake,
And I tethered myself to the shingle, till my country bade me wake;
Then I once more danced to the wind's tune and the Southern oceans knew
That the men and the ships they carried were safer because I flew.

I strained at my bow-taut halliards from Messina to Cape Matapan;[1]
It wasn't the wind that frayed me, but the speed of the ships in the van;
And for many a long day after, I flew midst despair and loss,
But none disputed the honour of my jack and my great red cross.[2]

[1] Chase of the *Goeben*.

[2] Dardanelles.

Tens of thousands revile me and pray for my colours to fade,
But I've covered ten thousand corpses and I'll fly till the debt is paid;
For thousands will fight for my honour, so long as my halliards last,
And if my halliards are shattered, fight on—*when I'm nailed to the mast.*

William M. James.

XXXIII

Undying Days

JANUARY 24TH, 1915

JUNE 1ST, 1794, 1813, 1916

FROM the "George" in Portsmouth High Street north
to the Scottish shore
The post-chaise carried the message; 'twas in seventeen
ninety-four;
Men quaffed their ale on the village green and danced to
the fiddler's tune,
And talked of Howe and the men he led on the glorious
First of June.
They sang and they danced, for they'd lost all fear
Of losing their maids and their baccy and beer.

From Plymouth Hoe to Yeovil town, through Reading to
Harrow Hill
Just twenty-nine years after, men called for their host to
fill
Their tankards up with English ale and the fiddler to scrape
a tune,
And talked of Broke and the *Shannon's* tars and the Battle
of First of June.

They danced and they toasted the frigate's crew,
And sang of the guns and the men in blue.

Once more from Plymouth and Portsmouth towns the news has spread like fire,
Instead of the chaise and its sweating team, it's carried by miles of wire;
Though beer is scarce and tobacco dear, and no fiddlers to give a tune,
Men talk of the fleet that held the field, and prayed for a "First of June."
No song and no dance, but a quiet content
For the news that their great grey ships have sent.

Merchants sailed from the Port of Leith and passed by the Head of Skaw,
And the sea to them looked all the same from St. Abb's to the Danish shore;
But the skippers knew of the Fisher Bank and the fifteen-fathom patch;
You'd have heard of it too in Jutland, when they talked of the "last night's catch."
They worked and fished on the slippery decks
With never a thought of gun-swept wrecks.

Travellers sailed from the Port of Hull to land on Stavanger pier,
And they never looked at the soundings, or thought of the course to steer;

But the skippers knew of the Dogger Bank where the lead
can "find" at eight;
You'd have heard of it too at Grimsby town, when the
boats were a few days late.
The packers and fishwives knew it well,
For that's where their men got the fish to sell.

But now the merchants from Port of Leith will ask for the
shallow patch,
And the Jutland men will haul their nets, fearing for what
they'll catch;
Talking ever of homes that shook when the great grey ves-
sels fought
And a fleet sent out on an enterprise, crippled and back
in port.
They'll marvel at men who'll struggle and drown
For the sake of the maids in an East Coast town.

The travellers, too, from the Port of Hull will ask for the
Dogger Bank,
And think of the day the great ships met, and the place
where the *Blücher* sank;
And talk of the deeds of sailor folk who fought for their
homes and trade,
And an enemy baffled by English strength, turned from an
East Coast raid.
They'll know they travel because men fought
And skilfully handled what strong men wrought.

Thousands who never have seen the sea, or the great grey
steel-clad forms,
Or the lithe black shapes of the smaller craft, or the scud
of the North Sea storms,
Will talk of armour and shells and guns, and the battle
by Horn Reef light,
And of sunken ships and of brave deeds done in the hours
of a short May night.
No song and no dance!—but they've lost the fear
Of losing their maids and their baccy and beer.

WILLIAM M. JAMES.

XXXIV

To a Naval Cadet

LOST IN H.M.S. "HOGUE," NORTH SEA, AUGUST, 1914

HERO of tender age,
Scarce had you turned a page
Of the fair Book of Life, ere it was ended:
As bud by autumn nipped,
Closed Youth's sweet manuscript,
Dust once again to dust descended.

Called from the sheltered peace
Of naval colleges,
True to the training and the breed of you,
Putting your games aside,
You thrilled with boyish pride
To think that now your Motherland had need of you.

Not yours to know delight
In the keen, hard-fought fight,
The shock of battle and the battle's thunder;
But suddenly to feel
Deep, deep beneath the keel,
The vital blow that rives the ship asunder.

Well might a soul more staid
Than yours have been afraid
In whom th' encroaching sea no fear could waken,
So to your end you passed
Steadfast unto the last,
Bearing your boyhood's courage still unshaken.

But ere the icy breath
Of that grim spectre Death
Had any power to affright or pain you,
Hovered around your head
Shades of our Greater Dead—
I like to think—to welcome and sustain you.

For all your tender years,
Amidst your mother's tears
Still must there be one glowing thought of pride for her,
And those less fortunate
Must envy you your fate
So to have served your Land and to have died for her.

NOEL F. M. CORBETT.

XXXV

Lines written somewhere in the North Sea

THE laggard hours drift slowly by; while silver mist-
wreaths veil the sky
And iron coast whereon, flung high, the North Sea breaks in
foam.
When flame the pallid Northern Lights on seeming age-
long winter nights,
Then oftentimes for our delight God sends a dream of Home.

And once again we know the peace of little red-roofed vil-
lages
That nestle close in some deep crease amid the rolling
wealds
That northward, eastward, southward sweep, fragrant with
thyme and flecked with sheep,
To where the corn is standing deep above the ripening fields.

And once again in that fair dream I see the sibilant, swift
stream—
Now gloomy-green and now agleam—that flows by Fur-
nace Mill,

And hear the plover's plaintive cry above the common at Holtye,
When redly glows the dusky sky and all the woods are still.

Oh, I remember as of old, the copse aflame with russet gold,
The sweet half-rotten scent of mould, the while I stand and hark
To unseen woodland life that stirs before the clamant game-keepers,
Till, sudden, out a pheasant whirrs to cries of "Mark cock, mark!"

And there are aged inns that sell the mellow, cool October ale,
What time one tells an oft-told tale around the friendly fires,
Until the clock with muffled chime asserts that it is closing time,
And o'er the fields now white with rime the company retires.

How long ago and far it seems, this peaceful country of our dreams,
Of fruitful fields and purling streams—the England that we know:
Who holds within her sea-girt ring all that we love, and love can bring;
Ah, Life were but a little thing to give to keep her so!

NOEL F. M. CORBETT.

XXXVI

Battle of the Falkland Isles

THE Isle Juan Fernandez off Valparaiso Bay,
'Twas there that Cradock sought
The action that he fought—
For he said: "To run from numbers is not our English way,
Nor do we question why
We are fore-ordained to die."
Though his guns were scooping water and his tops were blind with spray.

In the red light of the sunset his ships went down in flame,
He and his brave men
Were never seen again,
And Von Spee he stroked his beard, and said: "Those Englishmen are game,
But their dispositions are
More glorious than war;
Those that greyhounds set on mastiffs are surely much to blame."

Then the Board of Admiralty to Sir Doveton Sturdee said:
"Take a proper naval force
And steer a sou'west course,
And show the world that England is still a Power to dread."
Like scorpions and whips
Was vengeance to his ships,
And Cradock's guiding spirit flew before their line ahead.

Through tropic seas they shore like a meteor through the sky,
And the dolphins in their chase
Grew weary of the race;
The swift grey-pinioned albatross behind them could not fly,
And they never paused to rest
Upon the ocean's breast
Till their southern shadows lengthened and the Southern Cross rode high.

Then Sir Doveton Sturdee said in his flagship captain's ear:
"By yon kelp and brembasteen
'Tis the Falkland Isles, I ween,
Those mollymauks and velvet-sleeves they signal land is near,
Give your consorts all the sign
To swing out into line,
And keep good watch 'twixt ship and ship till Graf von Spee appear."

The Germans like grey shadows came stealing round the Horn,
Or as a wolf-pack prowls
With blood upon its jowls,
Their sides were pocked with gun-shots and their guns were battle-worn,
And their colliers down the wind
Like jackals trailed behind,
'Twas thus they met our cruisers on a bright December morn.

Like South Atlantic rollers half a mile from crest to crest,
Breaking on basalt rocks
In thunderous battle-shocks,
So our heavy British metal put their armour to the test.
And the Germans hurried north,
As our lightnings issued forth,
But our battle-line closed round them like a sickle east and west.

Each ship was as a pillar of grey smoke on the sea,
Or mists upon a fen,
Till they burst forth again
From their wraiths of battle-vapour by wind and speed made free;
Three hours the action sped,
Till, plunging by the head,
The *Scharnhorst* drowned the pennant of Admiral von Spee.

At the end of two hours more her sister ship went down
Beneath the bubbling wave,
The *Gneisenau* found her grave,
And *Nürnberg* and *Leipzig,* those cities of renown,
Their cruiser god-sons, too,
Were both pierced through and through,
There was but one of all five ships our gunners did not drown.

'Twas thus that Cradock died, 'twas thus Von Spee was slain,
'Twas thus that Sturdee paid
The score those Germans made,
'Twas thus St. George's Ensign was laundered white again,
Save the Red Cross over all
The graves of those who fall,
That England as of yore may be Mistress of the Main.

I. C.

XXXVII

Guns at Sea

LET me get back to the guns again, I hear them calling me,
And all I ask is my own ship, and the surge of the open sea,
In the long, dark nights, when the stars are out, and the clean salt breezes blow,
And the land's foul ways are half forgot, like nightmare, and I know
That the world is good, and life worth while, and man's real work to do,
In the final test, in Nature's school, to see which of us rings true.
On shore, in peace, men cheat and lie—but you can't do that at sea,
For the sea is strong; if your work is weak, vain is the weakling's plea
Of a "first offence" or "I'm only young," or "It shall not happen again,"
For the sea finds out your weakness, and writes its lesson plain.
"The liar, the slave, the slum-bred cur—let them stay ashore, say I,

"For, mark it well, if they come to me, I break them and they die.
The land is kind to a soul unsound; I find and probe the flaw,
For I am the tears of eternity that rock to eternal law."

I love the touch of the clean salt spray on my hands and hair and face,
I love to feel the long ship leap, when she feels the sea's embrace,
While down below is the straining hull, o'erhead the gulls and clouds,
And the clean wind comes 'cross the vast sea space, and sings its song in the shrouds.
But now in my dreams, besides the sounds one always hears at sea,
I hear the mutter of distant guns, which call and call to me,
Singing: "Come! The day is here for which you have waited long."
And women's tears, and craven fears, are drowned in that monstrous song.
So whatever the future hold in store, I feel that I must go,
To where, thro' the shattering roar, I hear a voice that whispers low:
"The craven, the weak, the man with nerves, from me they must keep away,
Or a dreadful price in shattered nerves, and broken health they pay.

But send me the man who is calm and strong, in the face of my roaring blast,
He shall tested be in my mighty fires, and if he shall live at the last,
He can go to his home, his friends, his kin, to his life e'er war began,
With a new-found soul, and a new-found strength, knowing himself a man."

IMTARFA.

XXXVIII

News of Jutland

June 3rd, 1916

(On June 3, 1916, when the news of our sad losses in our first great naval battle off the Jutland Bank had just come to hand, I went fishing with a sailor in the Naval Reserve. The following lines are, *almost word for word,* a transcript of his talk.)

THE news had flashed throughout the land,
The night had dropped in dread—
What would the morrow's sunrise tell
Of England's mighty dead?
What homes were wrecked? What hearts were doomed
To bleed in sorrow's school?

. . . .

At early morn I sought my friend,
The fisherman of Poole.

He waited there beside the steps:
The boat rocked just below:
"You're ready, m'm? The morning's fine!
I thought as how you'd go!
I dug the bait an hour agone—
We calls 'em 'lug-worms' here.
The news is grave? Aye, so I've heard!
Step in! Your skirt is clear.

"My brothers? Any news, you ask?
No, m'm! Nor like to be
A fortnight yet! Maybe they're both
Asleep beneath the sea!
I saw 'em start two years agone
Next August—and I says
We'll see 'em back by Christmas time—
But *we* don't know God's ways!

"I'll pull her round the fishing-boats!
The *Polly's* lying there!
D'you see her, m'm? The prettiest smack
For weather foul or fair!
It's just the ways they've builded her
As seems to make her feel
Alive! She's fifty sovereigns' worth
O' lead along her keel.

"Fine men my brothers war—I'll tie
Her up against this boom!
Don't fear to move free! This here boat
Is built with lots o' room!
You're safe with Jacob Matthews, m'm!
He's ne'er been called a fool
By any of the fisher-folk
As lives in little Poole!

"How many left? Well, maybe half;
They've gone off one by one.
It's likely I'll be gone myself
Afore the war is done.

Attested just a month agone,
And passed for fit and sound—
It's shallow here for flat-fish, m'm,
The boat's well-nigh aground.

"I'll throw your line out—that'll do!
Aye, fights on sea are grave!
There ain't no Red Cross people there
To lift you off the wave!
There ain't no 'cover' you can take,
No places to lie down!
You got to go—wi' red-hot shells
Just helping you to drown!

"It minds me of a night we men
Had got the life-boat out.
They'd 'phoned us up! And off we pulled
With many a cheer and shout!
We rowed her hard up to the wind,
And clear the moonlight shone—
But when we reached—you see, just there—
Both ship and crew were gone!

"We cruised around for half an hour!
Ah, m'm, our hearts was sore!
We'd looked to throw the line to them,
And bring 'em safe to shore!
Aye! these blue waves ha' swallowed up
More finer men than me!
But we've been always fisher-folk,
And *we* can't fear the sea!

"Why, there's a catch! Aye, pull it in!
'Tis on your second hook!
Well, that's as odd a little fish
As e'er a line ha' took!
I've ne'er seen nothing like it, m'm—
Don't touch it wi' your hand—
These strange 'uns prick like poison, m'm,
Sometimes—you understand?

"I'll take it off! It won't hurt *me!*
You wonder what it's called?
I couldn't say! The rummest thing
That ever yet was hauled!
A farthing's worth o' queerness, m'm,
I'd name it if 'twas priced!
A young John Dory? No—*they* bears
The marks o' Jesus Christ.

"You'll see His fingers and His thumb!
Where are they? Well, a bit
Beyond the gills—look! Here's the place,
Just where I'm holding it!
So *this* ain't no John Dory, m'm!
I'll put it safe away!
You'll tell your friends you pulled it from
The bottom o' Poole Bay!

" 'Twas better than a submarine?
There ain't such devils here!
We've got the North Sea trawlers down,
They keeps the harbour clear!

You saw a heap o' tangled wire
A-lyin' on the quay?
And thought as they'd just hauled it up?
Aye, m'm! That's how 'twould be.

"We're what they calls a 'Naval Base'
Since this here war abroke!
You seen it up? Aye, yonder there!
'Tis hard for fisher-folk!
We gets our catches in the night!
But we mayn't leave the Bay
Save when the sun is on the sea—
You don't catch much by day!

"But we've *our* bit to bear, as much
As richer men nor we.
We got to get a 'permit' now
To take our nets to sea.
We starts at dawn—if tides is right—
And, when the sun be gone,
Unless we lie inside the booms
We'd like be fired upon!

"You want to see the mack'rel shoals?
They come in black as—see—
Yon house that's tarred from roof to floor
Just there, beside the quay!
My smack's up now by Christchurch steps,
I've got my 'permit' signed!
I'll take you out o' Thursday next
If so be you've a mind?

I shan't be gone? Not yet! I waits
  Until I gets the call!—
If you'll come out, m'm, with the nets,
  I'll promise you a haul!
You're safe with Jacob Matthews, m'm!
  He's ne'er been called a fool
By any of the fisher-folk
  The war has left in Poole!"

ROMA WHITE.

War in the Air

XXXIX

Eyes in the Air

OUR guns are a league behind us, our target a mile below,
And there's never a cloud to blind us from the haunts of our lurking foe—
Sunk pit whence his shrapnel tore us, support-trench crest concealed,
As clear as the charts before us, his ramparts lie revealed.
His panicked watchers spy us, a droning threat in the void;
Their whistling shells outfly us—puff upon puff, deployed
Across the green beneath us, across the flanking grey,
In fume and fire to sheath us and baulk us of our prey.

Before, beyond, above her,
Their iron web is spun:
Flicked but unsnared we hover,
Edged planes against the sun:
Eyes in the air above his lair,
The hawks that guide the gun!

No word from earth may reach us, save, white against the ground,
The strips outspread to teach us whose ears are deaf to sound:

But down the winds that sear us, athwart our engine's shriek,
We send—and know they hear us, the ranging guns we speak.
Our visored eyeballs show us their answering pennant, broke
Eight thousand feet below us, a whorl of flame-stabbed smoke—
The burst that hangs to guide us, while numbed gloved fingers tap
From wireless key beside us the circles of the map.
Line—target—short or over—
Come, plain as clock hands run,
Words from the birds that hover,
Unblinded, tail to sun;
Words out of air to range them fair,
From hawks that guide the gun!

Your flying shells have failed you, your landward guns are dumb:
Since earth hath naught availed you, these skies be open! Come,
Where, wild to meet and mate you, flame in their beaks for breath,
Black doves! the white hawks wait you on the wind-tossed boughs of death.
These boughs be cold without you, our hearts are hot for this,
Our wings shall beat about you, our scorching breath shall kiss;

Till, fraught with that we gave you, fulfilled of our desire,
You bank—too late to save you from biting beaks of fire—
Turn sideways from your lover,
Shudder and swerve and run,
Tilt; stagger; and plunge over
Ablaze against the sun:
Doves dead in air, who clomb to dare
The hawks that guide the gun!

GILBERT FRANKAU.

XL

Command of the Air

A THOUSAND years between the sun and sea
Britannia held her court of liberty,
And cradled heroes in the questing waves
That were for lesser men but wandering graves.

Then did the British airman's sea-born skill
Teach wood and metal to foresee his will;
In every cog and joint his spirit stirred;
The Thing possessed was man as well as bird.

A falcon among timorous fowl he flies,
And bears Britannia's battle to the skies;
Vainly the Hun seeks covert in a cloud—
The clinging mist is made his ghostly shroud.

Thus at the ringing gates of heaven's glory
Begin new chapters of our island-story
And clarion voices of the void declare:
"She who has ruled the sea shall rule the air."

O.

XLI

A Song of the Plane

THIS is the song of the Plane—
The creaking, shrieking plane,
The throbbing, sobbing plane,
And the moaning, groaning wires:—
The engine—missing again!
One cylinder never fires!
Hey ho! for the Plane!

This is the song of the Man—
The driving, striving man,
The chosen, frozen man:—
The pilot, the man-at-the-wheel,
Whose limit is all that he *can,*
And beyond, if the need is real!
Hey ho! for the Man!

This is the song of the Gun—
The muttering, stuttering gun,
The maddening, gladdening gun:—
That chuckles with evil glee
At the last, long dive of the Hun,
With its end in eternity!
Hey ho! for the Gun!

This is the song of the Air—
The lifting, drifting air,
The eddying, steadying air,
The wine of its limitless space,
May it nerve us at last to dare
Even death with undaunted face!
Hey ho! for the Air.

GORDON ALCHIN.

XLII

Two Pictures

DAWN. . . .
And the dewy plain
Awakes to life and sound—
Where on the flying-ground
The ghostly hangars blaze with lights again.
The giant birds of prey
Creep forth to a new day,
And one by one,
As morning gilds the dome,
Leave the grey aerodrome—
The day's begun.

Dusk. . . .
And the vanish'd sun
Still streaks the evening skies:
Below, the prone earth lies
Darkened, wherever warring Night has won.
The 'planes, returning, show
Deep black in the afterglow,

And one by one
Drop down from the higher airs,
—Down, down the invisible stairs—
The day is done.

GORDON ALCHIN.

XLIII

Per Ardua ad Astra

FOR every soul
That's claimed by the outraged wind,
Humanity, take toll
In fuller knowledge of the world behind
The dawn-mist and the aery eventide—
In greater skill the paths of heaven to ride.

For every life—
God knows the price we've paid for sov'ranty—
For every life
Let Man exact the full indemnity:
That unborn men secure may ride at ease
The labyrinthine channels of the breeze.

GORDON ALCHIN.

XLIV

Reconnaissance

I JOURNEYED to the east,
Rolled on the surgent airs of autumn days:
Below, the earth lay creased
With myriad meadows in the morning haze.
Far off, where lay the sea,
A silvered mirror beckoned to my bent,
And, moving orderly,
The high cloud-armies marched magnificent.

Some menace in the sky,
Some quick alarm did wake me as I sped:
At once, unwarningly
Streamed out repeated death, from one that fled
Headlong before my turn—
But, unavoiding of the answering blast,
Checked sudden, fell astern—
And unmolested fared I to the last.

GORDON ALCHIN.

XLV

The Flight to Flanders

DOES he know the road to Flanders, does he know the criss-cross tracks
With the row of sturdy hangars at the end?
Does he know that shady corner where, the job done, we relax
To the music of the engines round the bend?
It is here that he is coming with his gun and battle 'plane
To the little aerodrome at—well, *you* know!
To a wooden hut abutting on a quiet country lane,
For he's ordered overseas and he must go.

Has he seen those leagues of trenches, the traverses steep and stark,
High over which the British pilots ride?
Does he know the fear of flying miles to eastward of his mark
When his only map has vanished over-side?
It is there that he is going, and it takes a deal of doing,
There are many things he really ought to know;
And there isn't time to swot 'em if a Fokker he's pursuing,
For he's ordered overseas and he must go.

Does he know that ruined town, that old —— of renown?
Has he heard the crack of Archie bursting near?
Has he known that ghastly moment when your engine lets you down?
Has he ever had that feeling known as fear?
It's to Flanders he is going with a brand-new aeroplane
To take the place of one that's dropped below,
To fly and fight and photo mid the storms of wind and rain,
For he's ordered overseas and he must go.

Then the hangar door flies open and the engine starts its roar,
And the pilot gives the signal with his hand;
As he rises over England he looks back upon the shore,
For the Lord alone knows where he's going to land.
Now the plane begins to gather speed, completing lap on lap,
Till, after diving down and skimming low,
They're off to shattered Flanders, by the compass and the map—
They were ordered overseas and had to go.

LESSEL HUTCHEON.

XLVI

The Death of the Zeppelin

A FALSE, false night! Across the sightless sky
Passed and repassed, again and yet again,
A many-flickering smile of irony,
The hieroglyphic of an evil thought.
A few pale stars glistened like drops of sweat
On the brow o' the east. . . . There was no wind—
The wind that was not whispered in the ear
Strange, crimson syllables of gathering doom;
Dread, flaming obsequies were in the eye
Before the fiery pencil traced them out;
And still the omens held, and still was heard
The voice of silence, the unspoken word.

. . . . .

At last! At last the wingèd Worm draws near,
The vulture-ship that dare not voyage by day,
The man-made Dinosaur that haunts the night,
The beast-like creature of a bestial mind,
Which preys by choice on small and innocent lives,
Drinking its blood well soothed with mothers' milk—

Whose reeking weapons scandalise the stars,
And do most foully wrong the sanctuary
Of God's tempestuous angels, the bright winds,
That haste about the globe at His behest.
Above the violet verge of the low east
This blind and obscene head of frightfulness
Was suddenly thrust. We marked its course afar
By dull pulsations of the eager guns,
The grey, lean warders of far-listening London;
By bursts of shell-fire, mimic Leonids,
Flame-petal'd stars all blossoming blood-red.
The harassed Worm sought covert in a cloud
Which, soon disparted, gave him for a prey
To the implacable airman hovering near
(His battle-plane was part of him that hour;
In every cog and joint his valour moved,
The thing possessed was man as well as bird)
Who pierced his bowels with a fiery bolt.
The Monster writhed in self-engendered flames
Which brake forth in the likeness of a rose,
A rose-white passion in the timeless night,
A torch of hell brandished at heaven's gate,
A piercing wonder in the million eyes
Of waking London. . . . At last he dropped,
A sombre coal of fading crimson fire,
Into his burial-place, a field defiled.
And then, but not till then, arose the cry,
Prolonged, unpitying, a cordite cheer
Of the old valiant city, stark as Time,
Which wills not mercy for the merciless.

Beyond the storied stream a bower of trees
Caught it and cast it back, through all their leaves
Thrilled with a vocal joy of vengeance due,
Paid but in part, which shall be paid in full.

O.

In Memoriam

XLVII

The Last Salute

H. S. G., Ypres, 1916

IN a far field, away from England, lies
A boy I friended with a care like love;
All day the wide earth aches, the keen wind cries,
The melancholy clouds drive on above.

There, separate from him by a little span
Two eagle cousins, generous, reckless, free,
Two Grenfells, lie, and my boy is made man,
One with these elder knights of chivalry.

Boy, who expected not this dreadful day,
Yet leaped, a soldier, at the sudden call,
Drank as your fathers, deeper though than they,
The soldier's cup of anguish, blood, and gall.

Not now as friend, but as a soldier, I
Salute you fallen. For the soldier's name
Our greatest honour is, if worthily
These wayward hearts assume and bear the same:

. . . . .

The Soldier's is a name none recognise
  Saving his fellows. Deeds are all his flower.
He lives, he toils, he suffers, and he dies,
  And if not vainly spent, this is his dower.

The Soldier is the Martyr of a nation,
  Expresses but is subject to its will,
His is the Pride ennobles Resignation
  As his the rebel Spirit-to-fulfil.

Anonymous, he takes his country's name,
  Becomes its blindest vassal—though its lord
By force of arms—its shame is called his shame,
  As its the glory gathered by his sword.

Lonely he is: he has nor friend nor lover,
  Sith in his body he is dedicate. . . .
His comrades only share his life and offer
  Their further deeds to one more heart oblate.

Living, he's made an "Argument Beyond"
  For others' peace; but when hot wars have birth,
For all his brothers' safety he is bond
  To Fate or Whatsoever sways this Earth.

Dying, his mangled body, to inter it,
  He doth bequeath him into comrade hands,
His soul he renders to some Captain Spirit
  That knows, admires, pities, and understands!
. . . . . .

All this you knew by that which doth reside
  Deeper than learning; by apprehension
Of ancient, dark, and melancholy pride;
  You were a Soldier true and died as one! . . .

All day the long wind cries, the clouds unroll,
  But to the cloud and wind I cry, "Be still!"
What need of comfort has the heroic soul?
  What soldier finds a soldier's grave is chill?

ROBERT NICHOLS.

XLVIII

A Dirge

THOU art no longer here,
No longer shall we see thy face,
But, in that other place,
Where may be heard
The roar of the world rushing down the wantways of the stars;
And the silver bars
Of heaven's gate
Shine soft and clear:
Thou mayest wait.

No longer shall we see
Thee walking in the crowded streets,
But where the ocean of the Future beats
Against the flood-gates of the Present, swirling to this earth,
Another birth
Thou mayest have;
Another Arcady
May thee receive.
Not here thou dost remain,
Thou art gone far away,

Where, at the portals of the day,
The hours ever dance in ring, a silvern-footed throng,

While Time looks on,
And seraphs stand
Choiring an endless strain
On either hand.

Thou canst return no more;
Not as the happy time of spring
Comes after winter burgeoning
On wood and wold in folds of living green, for thou art dead.
Our tears we shed
In vain, for thou
Dost pace another shore,
Untroubled now.

VICTOR PEROWNE.

XLIX

R. B.

IT was April we left Lemnos, shining sea and snow-white camp,
Passing onward into darkness. Lemnos shone a golden lamp,
As a low harp tells of thunder, so the lovely Lemnos air
Whispered of the dawn and battle; and we left a comrade there.

He who sang of dawn and evening, English glades and light of Greece,
Changed his dreaming into sleeping, left his sword to rest in peace.
Left his visions of the springtime, Holy Grail and Golden Fleece,
Took the leave that has no ending, till the waves of Lemnos cease.

There will be enough recorders ere this fight of ours be done,
And the deeds of men made little, swiftly cheapened one by one;

Bitter loss his golden harpstrings and the treasure of his youth;
Gallant foe and friend may mourn him, for he sang the knightly truth.

Joy was his in his clear singing, clean as is the swimmer's joy;
Strong the wine he drank of battle, fierce as that they poured in Troy.
Swift the shadows steal from Athos, but his soul was morning-swift,
Greek and English he made music, caught the cloud-thoughts we let drift.

Sleep you well, you rainbow comrade, where the wind and light is strong,
Overhead and high above you, let the lark take up your song.
Something of your singing lingers, for the men like me who pass,
Till all singing ends in sighing, in the sighing of the grass.

AUBREY HERBERT.

L

To Certain Comrades

(E. S. AND J. H.)

LIVING we loved you, yet withheld our praises
Before your faces.

And though our spirits had you high in honour!
After the English manner,

We said no word. Yet as such comrades would,
You understood.

Such friendship is not touched by death's disaster,
But stands the faster.

And all the shocks and trials of time cannot
Shake it one jot.

Beside the fire at night some far December
We shall remember

And tell men unbegotten as yet the story
Of your sad glory.

Of your plain strength, your truth of heart, your splendid
Coolness—all ended. . . .

All ended! Yet the aching hearts of lovers
Joy over-covers;

Glad in their sorrow, hoping that if they must
Come to the dust,

An ending such as yours may be their portion
And great good fortune.

That if we may not live to serve in peace
England—watching increase—

Then death with you, honoured and swift and high,
And so—Not Die.

IVOR GURNEY.

LI

Ode to a Young Man

WHO DIED OF WOUNDS IN FLANDERS, JANUARY 1915

IN MEMORIAM R. W. R. G.

CAN it be true that thou art dead
  In the hour of thy youth, in the day of thy strength?
Must I believe thy soul has fled
  Through heaven's length?

A scholar wast thou, learn'd in lore;
  Poet was written in thine eyes.
Thou ne'er wast meant for bloody war
  To seize in prize.

Yet when they asked thee, "Lo! what dost thou bring?"
Thou gav'st thyself,
Thou gav'st thy body, gav'st thy soul;
Thou gav'st thyself, one consecrated whole
To sacrificial torture for thy King.

O lovely youth, slaughtered at manhood's dawn,
In virgin purity thou liest dead,
And slaughtered were thy sons unborn,
With thee unwed.

Sleep on, pure youth, sleep at Earth's soothing breast,
No king's sarcophagus was e'er so fine
As that poor shallow soldier's grave of thine,
Where all ungarlanded thou tak'st thy rest.

DYNELY HUSSEY.

LII

Goliath and David

For D. C. T., killed at Fricourt, March 1916

ONCE an earlier David took
Smooth pebbles from the brook:
Out between the lines he went
To that one-sided tournament,
A shepherd boy who stood out fine
And young to fight a Philistine
Clad all in brazen mail. He swears
That he's killed lions, he's killed bears,
And those that scorn the God of Zion
Shall perish so like bear or lion.
But the historian of that fight
Had not the heart to tell it right.
Striding within javelin range
Goliath marvels at this strange
Goodly-faced boy so proud of strength.
David's clear eye measures the length;
With hand thrust back, he cramps one knee,
Poises a moment thoughtfully,
And hurls with a long vengeful swing.
The pebble, humming from the sling

Like a wild bee, flies a sure line
For the forehead of the Philistine,
Then . . . but there comes a brazen clink,
And quicker than a man can think
Goliath's shield parries each cast,
Clang! clang! and clang! was David's last.
Scorn blazes in the Giant's eye
Towering unhurt six cubits high.
Says foolish David, "Damn your shield,
And damn my sling, but I'll not yield."
He takes his staff of Mamre oak,
A knotted shepherd-staff that's broke
The skull of many a wolf and fox
Come filching lambs from Jesse's flocks.
Loud laughs Goliath, and that laugh
Can scatter chariots like blown chaff
To rout: but David, calm and brave,
Holds his ground, for God will save.
Steel crosses wood, a flash, and oh!
Shame for Beauty's overthrow!
(God's eyes are dim, His ears are shut.)
One cruel backhand sabre cut—
"I'm hit, I'm killed," young David cries,
Throws blindly forward, chokes . . . and dies.
And look, spike-helmeted, grey, grim,
Goliath straddles over him.

ROBERT GRAVES.

LIII

To R—— at Anzac

YOU left your vineyards, dreaming of the vines in a dream land
And dim Italian cities where high cathedrals stand.
At Anzac in the evening, so many things we planned,
And now you sleep with comrades in the Anafarta sand.

There are men go gay to battle like the cavaliers to dance,
And some with happy dreamings like princes in romance,
And some men march unquestioning to where the answer lies,
The dawn that comes like darkness they meet with lover's eyes.

You heard the bugles call to arms, and like a storm men's cheers,
But veiled behind that music, you knew the women's tears.
You heard the Vikings singing in a rapture to the sea,
And passing clear beyond that song, the waves of Galilee.

You lived for peace and lived for war, you knew no little strife;
To conquer first, then help your foe, made music of your life.
And for the sake of those you led, you gave your life away,
As youth might fling a coin of gold upon a sunny day.

If Odin mustered Vikings, you would rule his pagan crew.
If Mary came to choose her knights, she'd hand her sword to you.
Men scattered in the wilderness, or crowded in the street,
Would choose you for their leader and glory in defeat.

You'd find a bridge to Lazarus, or any man in pain.
There are not many like you that I shall see again;
I do not grieve for you who laughed, and went into the shade,
I sorrow for the dream that's lost, Italian plans we made.

Good-bye! It's Armageddon. You will not prune your vine,
Nor taste the salt of channel winds, nor hear the singing Rhine.
You'll sleep with friends and enemies until the trumpet sounds,
And open are the thrones of kings, and all the Trojan mounds.

When women's tears are rainbows then, that shine across
the sky,
And swords are raised in last salute, to a comrade enemy,
And what men fought and failed for, or what men strove
and won,
Are like forgotten shadows, and clouds that hid the sun.

AUBREY HERBERT.

LIV

To John

O HEART-AND-SOUL and careless played
Our little band of brothers,
And never recked the time would come
To change our games for others.
It's joy for those who played with you
To picture now what grace
Was in your mind and single heart
And in your radiant face.
Your light-foot strength by flood and field
For England keener glowed;
To whatsoever things are fair
We know, through you, the road;
Nor is our grief the less thereby;
O swift and strong and dear, good-bye.

WILLIAM GRENFELL.

[1] The Hon. John Manners.

LV

To C. A. L.

TO have laughed and talked—wise, witty, fantastic, feckless—
To have mocked at rules and rulers and learnt to obey,
To have led your men with a daring adored and reckless,
To have struck your blow for Freedom, the old straight way:

To have hated the world and lived among those who love it,
To have thought great thoughts and lived till you knew them true,
To have loved men more than yourself and have died to prove it—
Yes, Charles, this is to have lived: was there more to do?

C. A. A.

[1] The Hon. Charles Lister.

The Future Hope

LVI

Gifts of the Dead

BLOW out, you bugles, over the rich dead!
There's none of these so lonely and poor of old,
But, dying, has made us rarer gifts than gold.
These laid the world away; poured out the red
Sweet wine of youth; gave up the years to be
Of work and joy, and that unhoped serene,
That men call age; and those who would have been,
Their sons, they gave, their immortality.

Blow, bugles, blow! They brought us, for our dearth
Holiness, lacked so long, and Love, and Pain.
Honour has come back, as a king, to earth,
And paid his subjects with a royal wage;
And Nobleness walks in our ways again;
And we have come into our heritage.

RUPERT BROOKE.

LVII

War's Cataract

IN this red havoc of the patient earth,
Though higher yet the tide of battle rise,
Now has the hero cast away disguise,
And out of ruin splendour comes to birth.
This is the field where Death and Honour meet,
And all the lesser company are low:
Pale Loveliness has left her mirror now
And walks the Court of Pain with silent feet.

From cliff to cliff war's cataract goes down,
Hurling its booming waters to the shock;
And, tossing high their manes of gleaming spray,
The crested chargers leap from rock to rock,
While over all, dark though the thunder frown,
The rainbows climb above to meet the day.

HERBERT ASQUITH.

LVIII

Reincarnation

I TOO remember distant golden days
When even my soul was young; I see the sand
Whirl in a blinding pillar towards the band
Of orange sky-line 'neath a turquoise blaze—
(Some burnt-out sky spread o'er a glistening land)
—And slim brown jargoning men in blue and gold,
I know it all so well, I understand
The ecstasy of worship ages-old.

Hear the first truth: The great far-seeing soul
Is ever in the humblest husk; I see
How each succeeding section takes its toll
In fading cycles of old memory.
And each new life the next life shall control
Until perfection reach eternity.

E. Wyndham Tennant.

Ramparts, Ypres,
July 1916.

LIX

The Dead, 1915

YE that have hewn from death's dark stubborn stone
Immortal frescoes lovelier than light,
And given to sacrifice a rosier might
Than all unstable Autumn's wealth unstrown,
And unto Life such terrible renown,
And unto Love a loss so sweet and white
That purer than the stars he stands to-night
Smiling serene, unspeakably alone—

If aught of earth can reach immortal ears,
May truth's white bird of rumour, mounting high,
Bring you the secret of our hidden tears
And the proud falsehood of the tearless eye;
Till in the heavy wrappage of the years
Death's self be hid and sad truth seem a lie.

WILLOUGHBY WEAVING.

LX

Two Sonnets

I

SAINTS have adored the lofty soul of you.
Poets have whitened at your high renown.
We stand among the many millions who
Do hourly wait to pass your pathway down.
You, so familiar, once were strange: we tried
To live as of your presence unaware.
But now in every road on every side
We see your straight and steadfast signpost there.

I think it like that signpost in my land
Hoary and tall, which pointed me to go
Upward, into the hills, on the right hand,
Where the mists swim and the winds shriek and blow,
A homeless land and friendless, but a land
I did not know and that I wished to know.

II

Such, such is Death: no triumph: no defeat:
Only an empty pail, a slate rubbed clean,
A merciful putting away of what has been.

And this we know: Death is not Life effete,
Life crushed, the broken pail. We who have seen
So marvellous things know well the end's not yet.

Victor and vanquished are a-one in death:
Coward and brave: friend, foe. Ghosts do not say,
"Come, what was your record when you drew breath?"
But a big blot has hid each yesterday
So poor, so manifestly incomplete.
And your bright promise, withered long and sped,
Is touched, stirs, rises, opens and grows sweet
And blossoms and is you, when you are dead.

CHARLES HAMILTON SORLEY.

LXI

To Germany

YOU are blind like us. Your hurt no man designed,
And no man claimed the conquest of your land.
But, gropers both through fields of thought confined,
We stumble and we do not understand.
You only saw your future bigly planned,
And we, the tapering paths of our own mind,
And in each other's dearest ways we stand,
And hiss and hate. And the blind fight the blind.

When it is peace, then we may view again
With new-won eyes each other's truer form,
And wonder. Grown more loving-kind and warm,
We'll grasp firm hands and laugh at the old pain,
When it is peace. But, until peace, the storm,
The darkness, and the thunder and the rain.

CHARLES HAMILTON SORLEY.

LXII

If we return

IF we return, will England be
Just England still to you and me?
The place where we must earn our bread?
We who have walked among the dead,
And watched the smile of agony,
And seen the price of Liberty,
Which we had taken carelessly
From other hands. Nay, we shall dread,
If we return,
Dread lest we hold blood-guiltily
The things that men have died to free.
Oh, English fields shall blossom red
For all the blood that has been shed
By men whose guardians are we,
If we return.

F. W. Harvey.

LXIII

A People Renewed

NOW these like men shall live,
And like to princes fall.
They take what Fate will give
At this great festival.

And since at length they find
That life is sweet indeed,
They cast it on the wind
To serve their country's need.

See young "Adventure" there
("Make-money-quick" that was)
Hurls down his gods that were
For Honour and the Cross!

Old "Grab-at-Gold" lies low
In Flanders. And again
(Because men will it so)
England is ruled by Men.

F. W. HARVEY.

LXIV

Afterwards

THOSE dreadful evidences of Man's ill-doing
The kindly Mother of all shall soon hide deep,
Covering with tender fingers her children asleep,
Till Time's slow cycle turns them to renewing
In other forms their beauty—No grief, no rueing
Irrevocable woe. They'll lie, they'll steep
Their hearts in peace unfathomed, till they leap
Quick to the light of the sun, as flowers strewing,
Maybe, their own friends' paths. And that's not all.
When men who knew them walk old ways alone,
The paths they loved together, at even-fall,
Then the sad heart shall know a presence near,
Friendly, familiar, and the old grief gone,
The new keen joy shall make all darkness clear.

IVOR GURNEY.

LXV

When it's Over

YOUNG soldier, what will you be
When it's all over?"
"I shall get out and across the sea,
Where land's cheap and a man can thrive.
I shall make money. Perhaps I'll wive
In a place where there's room for a family.
I'm a bit of a rover."

"Young soldier, what will you be
At the last 'Dismiss'?"
"Bucked to get back to old Leicester Square,
Where there's good champagne and a glad eye winking,
And no more 'Verey Lights' damnably blinking
Their weary, dreary, white-eyed stare.
I'll be out of this."

"Young soldier, what will you be
When they sign the peace?"
"Blowed if I know; perhaps I shall stick it.
The job's all right if you take it steady.

After all, somebody's got to be ready,
And tons of the blighters 'll get their ticket.
Wars don't cease."

"Young soldier, what will you be
At the day's end?"
"Tired's what I'll be. I shall lie on the beach
Of a shore where the rippling waves just sigh,
And listen and dream and sleep and lie
Forgetting what I've had to learn and teach
And attack and defend."

"Young soldier, what will you be
When you're next a-bed?"
"God knows what; but it doesn't matter,
For whenever I think, I always remember
The Belgians massacred that September,
And England's pledge—and the rest seems chatter.
What if I *am* dead?"

"Young soldier, what will you be
When it's all done?"
"I shall come back and live alone
On an English farm in the Sussex Weald,
Where the wounds in my mind will be slowly sealed,
And the graves in my heart will be overgrown;
And I'll sit in the sun."

"Young soldier, what will you be
At the 'Last Post'?"
"Cold, cold in the tender earth,
A cold body in foreign soil;
But a happy spirit fate can't spoil,
And an extra note in the blackbird's mirth
From a khaki ghost."

MAX PLOWMAN.

LXVI

Optimism

AT last there'll dawn the last of the long year,
Of the long year that seemed to dream no end;
Whose every dawn but turned the world more drear
And slew some hope, or led away some friend.
Or be you dark, or buffeting, or blind,
We care not, Day, but leave not death behind.

The hours that feed on war go heavy-hearted:
Death is no fare wherewith to make hearts fain;
Oh! We are sick to find that they who started
With glamour in their eyes come not again.
Oh Day, be long and heavy if you will,
But on our hopes set not a bitter heel.

For tiny hopes, like tiny flowers of spring,
Will come, though death and ruin hold the land;
Though storms may roar they may not break the wing
Of the earthed lark whose song is ever bland.
Fell year unpitiful, slow days of scorn,
Your kind shall die, and sweeter days be borne.

A. V. Ratcliffe.

The Christian Soldier

LXVII

The Cross of Wood

GOD be with you and us who go our way
And leave you dead upon the ground you won.
For you at last the long fatigue is done,
The hard march ended; you have rest to-day.

You were our friends; with you we watched the dawn
Gleam through the rain of the long winter night,
With you we laboured till the morning light
Broke on the village, shell-destroyed and torn.

Not now for you the glorious return
To steep Stroud valleys, to the Severn leas
By Tewkesbury and Gloucester, or the trees
Of Cheltenham under high Cotswold stern.

For you no medals such as others wear—
A cross of bronze for those approvèd brave—
To you is given, above a shallow grave,
The Wooden Cross that marks you resting there.

Rest you content; more honourable far
Than all the Orders is the Cross of Wood,
The symbol of self-sacrifice that stood
Bearing the God whose brethren you are.

CYRIL WINTERBOTHAM.

LXVIII

What is War?

WHAT is war?
Ask the young men who fight,
Men who defend the right,
Ask *them*—what is war?
"Honour—or death—that is war,"
Say the young men.

What is war?
Ask of the women who weep,
Mourning for those who sleep,
Ask *them*—what is war?
"Sorrow and grief—that is war,"
Say the women.

What is war?
By ways beyond our ken,
God tries the souls of men,
Sends retribution just,
Punishing vice and lust,
God's wrath for sin—that is war.

J. M. Rose-Troup.

Weilburg a. d. Lahn,
February 11th, 1916.

LXIX

How long, O Lord?

HOW long, O Lord, how long, before the flood
Of crimson-welling carnage shall abate?
From sodden plains in West and East, the blood
Of kindly men steams up in mists of hate,
Polluting Thy clean air; and nations great
In reputation of the arts that bind
The world with hopes of heaven, sink to the state
Of brute barbarians, whose ferocious mind
Gloats o'er the bloody havoc of their kind,
Not knowing love or mercy. Lord, how long
Shall Satan in high places lead the blind
To battle for the passions of the strong?
Oh, touch Thy children's hearts, that they may know
Hate their most hateful, pride their deadliest foe.

ROBERT PALMER.

LXX

Release

THERE is a healing magic in the night,
The breeze blows cleaner than it did by day,
Forgot the fever of the fuller light,
And sorrow sinks insensibly away
As if some saint a cool white hand did lay
Upon the brow, and calm the restless brain.
The moon looks down with pale unpassioned ray—
Sufficient for the hour is its pain.
Be still and feel the night that hides away earth's stain.
Be still and loose the sense of God in you,
Be still and send your soul into the all,
The vasty distance where the stars shine blue,
No longer antlike on the earth to crawl.
Released from time and sense of great or small,
Float on the pinions of the Night-Queen's wings;
Soar till the swift inevitable fall
Will drag you back into all the world's small things;
Yet for an hour be one with all escapèd things.

COLWYN PHILIPPS.*

* Found in his note-book when his kit came home.

LXXI

In the Lower Garden

The Rose

WHY do you leave me always here?
For me no usefulness is found;
I have no beauty anywhere;
Will you not tear me from the ground?

The Gardener

Watch ye the lilies how they grow,
They neither toil nor make complaint.
Look at their gentleness, and know
They are a strength to stay the faint.

The Rose

I do not see the lilies, Lord,
And I am weary of this waste.

The Gardener

Watch ye the grass upon the sward;
The lily never grows in haste.

The Rose

Yea, in the grass I see a stalk;
The bending leaves to left and right
Fashion a cross beside the walk
Tell me the meaning of this sight.

The Gardener

The lily makes a cross because
I planted it to give a sign
That what the Word of God once was
Shall ever be the truth benign.

The Rose

See on the stem it bows its head
Stooping to open unto earth.

The Gardener

So on the cross the Saviour dead
Opened to man a second birth.

The Rose

Oh what a lovely yellow bloom,
Crown of the richest golden hue!
Light from the Garden's open Tomb,
Give me a golden flower too!

The Gardener

Know ye the spirit of your kind?
It is not Mine to make it so;
Colour and form are of the mind;
Ponder the lilies, how they blow!

The Rose

Now do I feel a bud of life
Springing from out my slender trail.

The Gardener

Soon you will bear the fruit of strife
That draws to earth the Holy Grail.

The Rose

Grant me the fulness of Thy grace,
An open heart, that ever knows
Wisdom and strength Thy love to trace,
Blossoming forth a full-blown rose.

The Gardener

Ponder the lilies! Pomp and pride,
Wisdom and honour, wealth and dress,
Solomon's glory never vied
With all the splendour they possess!

The Rose

Give me just wisdom, peace of mind,
To be the Watchman of my Tower.

The Gardener

There is no wisdom more to find
If you but know this golden flower!

The Rose

While the pure form I contemplate,
And note the humble drooping pose,
A stirring quickens my estate;
The bud becomes a full-blown rose.

The Gardener

Thou must let fall thy petals too,
And thou shalt be both pure and great;
Thy ruddy splendour, royal hue,
Betokens Life Illuminate!

The Rose

O Thou to whom all hearts are pure,
Thy prescience telleth my desire!

The Gardener

The lily tells you to endure
And pray the Spirit to inspire.

The Rose

This have I done, Lord, from the first,
But this is finite, where we dwell,
For Living Water, Lord, I thirst;
Thou art the Water and the Well!

The Gardener

There is a life beyond the grave;
Leave all, unite with Me, and rise
Upwards, and bless the One who gave
The lily power to make men wise!

H. S. GRAHAM.

March 1916.

LXXII

A Christmas Prayer

From the Trenches

NOT yet for us may Christmas bring
Good-will to men, and peace;
In our dark sky no angels sing,
Not yet the great release
For men, when war shall cease.

So must the guns our carols make,
Our gifts must bullets be,
For us no Christmas bells shall wake;
These ruined homes shall see
No Christmas revelry.

In hardened hearts we fain would greet
The Babe at Christmas born,
But lo, He comes with piercèd feet,
Wearing a crown of thorn,—
His side a spear has torn.

For tired eyes are all too dim,
Our hearts too full of pain,
Our ears too deaf to hear the hymn
Which angels sing in vain,
"The Christ is born again."

O Jesus, pitiful, draw near,
That even we may see
The Little Child who knew not fear;
Thus would we picture Thee
Unmarred by agony.

O'er death and pain triumphant yet
Bid Thou Thy harpers play,
That we may hear them, and forget
Sorrow and all dismay,
And welcome Thee to stay
With us on Christmas Day.

CYRIL WINTERBOTHAM.

LXXIII

Holy Communion Service, Suvla Bay

BEHOLD a table spread!
A battered corned-beef box, a length of twine,
An altar-rail of twigs and shreds of string.
. . . For the unseen, divine,
Uncomprehended Thing
A hallowed space amid the holy dead.

Behold a table spread!
And on a fair, white cloth the bread and wine,
The symbols of sublime compassioning,
The very outward sign
Of that the nations sing,
The body that He gave, the blood He shed.

Behold a table spread!
And kneeling soldiers in God's battle-line,
A line of homage to a mightier King:
All-knowing All-benign!
Hearing the prayers they bring,
Grant to them strength to follow where He led.

W. H. LITTLEJOHN.

School and College

LXXIV

The Field of Honour

MUD-STAINED and rain-sodden, a sport for flies
and lice,
Out of this vilest life into vile death he goes;
His grave will soon be ready, where the grey rat knows
There is fresh meat slain for her;—our mortal bodies rise,
In those foul scampering bellies, quick—and yet, those
eyes
That stare on life still out of death, and will not close,
Seeing in a flash the Crown of Honour, and the Rose
Of Glory wreathed about the Cross of Sacrifice,

Died radiant. May some English traveller to-day
Leaving his city cares behind him, journeying west
To the brief solace of a sporting holiday,
Quicken again with boyish ardour, as he sees,
For a moment, Windsor Castle towering on the crest
And Eton still enshrined among remembering trees.

CHARLES SCOTT-MONCRIEFF.

LXXV

Harrow's Honour

"Let us now praise famous men"

A WEARY time, a dreary time, a time of hopes and fears,
The weeks that pass, the months that pass and lengthen into years.
My heart goes back to Harrow, to Harrow far away,
And Harrow sends a message to cheer me on my way.
"For good come, bad come, they came the same before,
So heigh ho, follow the game, and show the way to more."

. . . . .

Mourn not for those whose names are writ in gold,
They fought for England, gladly gave their all.
Kept Harrow's honour spotless as of old,
Nor feared to answer to the last great call.

They showed the way to more, their names will ring
Through all succeeding years of Harrow's fame,
Whatever changes after years may bring
Their sons will follow up and play the game.

O Mother Herga, all our thanks we give
For all your care of us, your watchful eye:
You made us men, you taught us how to live,
And in your wisdom taught us how to die.

The strongest bond of all, the bond of friends
Made in our youth, a bond that naught can break,
Binds us to you until our journey ends,
We live, we fight, we die for Harrow's sake.

J. M. Rose-Troup.

Friedberg in Hessen,
June 20th, 1916.

LXXVI

A Letter from the Trenches to a School Friend

I HAVE not brought my *Odyssey*
With me here across the sea;
But you'll remember, when I say
How, when they went down Sparta way,
To sandy Sparta, long ere dawn
Horses were harnessed, rations drawn,
Equipment polished sparkling bright,
And breakfasts swallowed (as the white
Of eastern heavens turned to gold)—
The dogs barked, swift farewells were told.
The sun springs up, the horses neigh,
Crackles the whip thrice—then away!
From sun-go-up to sun-go-down
All day across the sandy down
The gallant horses galloped, till
The wind across the downs more chill
Blew, the sun sank and all the road
Was darkened, that it only showed

Right at the end the town's red light
And twilight glimmering into night.

The horses never slackened till
They reached the doorway and stood still.
Then came the knock, the unlading; then
The honey-sweet converse of men,
The splendid bath, the change of dress,
Then—oh the grandeur of their Mess,
The henchmen, the prim stewardess!
And oh the breaking of old ground,
The tales, after the port went round!
(The wondrous wiles of old Odysseus,
Old Agamemnon and his misuse
Of his command, and that young chit
Paris—who didn't care a bit
For Helen—only to annoy her
He did it really, κ.τ.λ.)
But soon they led amidst the din
The honey-sweet ἀοιδός in,
Whose eyes were blind, whose soul had sight,
Who knew the fame of men in fight—
Bard of white hair and trembling foot,
Who sang whatever God might put
Into his heart.
And there he sung,
Those war-worn veterans among,
Tales of great war and strong hearts wrung,
Of clash of arms, of council's brawl,
Of beauty that must early fall,

Of battle hate and battle joy
By the old windy walls of Troy.
They felt that they were unreal then,
Visions and shadow-forms, not men.
But those the Bard did sing and say
(Some were their comrades, some were they)
Took shape and loomed and strengthened more
Greatly than they had guessed of yore.
And now the fight begins again,
The old war-joy, the old war-pain.
Sons of one school across the sea
We have no fear to fight—

. . . .

And soon, oh soon, I do not doubt it,
With the body or without it,
We shall all come tumbling down
To our old wrinkled red-capped town.
Perhaps the road up Ilsley way,
The old ridge-track, will be my way.
High up among the sheep and sky,
Look down on Wantage, passing by,
And see the smoke from Swindon town;
And then full left at Liddington,
Where the four winds of heaven meet
The earth-blest traveller to greet.
And then my face is toward the south,
There is a singing on my mouth:
Away to rightward I descry
My Barbury ensconced in sky,

Far underneath the Ogbourne twins,
And at my feet the thyme and whins,
The grasses with their little crowns
Of gold, the lovely Aldbourne downs,
And that old signpost (well I knew
That crazy signpost, arms askew,
Old mother of the four grass ways).
And then my mouth is dumb with praise,
For, past the wood and chalkpit tiny,
A glimpse of Marlborough ἐρατεινή!
So I descend beneath the rail
To warmth and welcome and wassail.

. . . . .

This from the battered trenches—rough,
Jingling and tedious enough.
And so I sign myself to you:
One, who some crooked pathways knew
Round Bedwyn: who could scarcely leave
The Downs on a December eve:
Was at his happiest in shorts,
And got—not many good reports!
Small skill of rhyming in his hand—
But you'll forgive—you'll understand.

CHARLES HAMILTON SORLEY.

LXXVII

Domum

(Omnibus Wiccamicis)

THE green and grey and purple day is barred with clouds of dun,
From Ypres city smouldering before the setting sun;
Another hour will see it flower, lamentable sight,
A bush of burning roses underneath the night.

Who's to fight for Flanders; who will set them free,
The war-worn lowlands by the English sea?
Who, my young companions, will choose a way to war,
That Marlborough, Wellington, have trodden out before?

Are these mere names? Then hear a solemn sound:
The blood of our brothers is crying from the ground:
"What we dared and died for, what the rest may do,
Little sons of Wykeham, is it naught to you?

"Father and Founder, our feet may never more
Tread the stones of Flint-Court or Gunner's green shore,
But wherever they assemble, we are pressing near,
Calling and calling:—could our brothers hear!"

What was it you fought for, whose profit that you died?
Here is Ypres burning and twenty towns beside,
Where is the gain in all our pain when he we loved but now
Is lying still on Sixty Hill, a bullet through his brow?

"He died one thing regarding that is better worth
Than the golden cities of all the kings on earth.
Were right and wrong to choose among, he had seen the right,
Had found the thing appointed and done it with his might."

Thus I muse, regarding, with a pensive eye,
Towered Ypres blazing, beneath the night sky . . .
This way may lie failure, but Towers there are that stand,
Hence, it may be, guarded, in our own green land.

CHARLES SCOTT-MONCRIEFF.

ST. ELOI,
June 1915.

LXXVIII

Ave, Mater—atque Vale

THE deathless mother, grey and battle-scarred,
Lies in the sanctuary of stately trees,
Where the deep Northern night is saffron starred
Above her head, and thro' the dusk she sees
God's shadowy fortress keep unsleeping guard.

From her full breast we drank of joy and mirth
And gave to her a boy's unreasoned heart,
Wherein Time's fulness was to bring to birth
Such passionate allegiance that to part
Seemed like the passing of all light on earth.

Now on the threshold of a man's estate,
With a new depth of love akin to pain
I ask thy blessing, while I dedicate
My life and sword, with promise to maintain
Thine ancient honour yet inviolate.

Last night dream-hearted in the Abbey's spell
We stood to sing old Simeon's passing hymn,
When sudden splendour of the sunset fell
Full on my eyes, and passed and left all dim—
At once a summons and a deep farewell.

I am content—our life is but a trust
From the great hand of God, and if I keep
The immortal Treasure clean of mortal rust
Against His claim, 'tis well and let me sleep
Among the not dishonourable dust.

W. N. Hodgson.

LXXIX

Historic Oxford

OH! Time hath loaded thee with memories
Processional. What could these piles unfold
Of war's lost travail, and the wearied cries
Of vexèd warriors, struggling to hold
Their hearth secure against proud Norman arms?
—And yet the while thy quest was not forgot;
'Mid war and waste and perilous alarms
Ever thy purpose stood, and yielded not.
Noble in faith, gallant in chivalry,
Thou flung'st a radiant word to all the land,—
Pluck'd from the wealth of thy philosophy,
And to the world upon the breezes strewn;—
When, great with loyalty, thou didst withstand
The kingly perjurer in battle brave:
While England's Lady by the Winter's boon
Fled from thy peril o'er the frozen wave.
What need to tell of all thy generous sons?—
The priestly Theobald, and in his train
Master Vacarius, mighty in old law,
And the great multitudes that now remain
But shadows flitting in dim pageantry

Across the low-lit stage. In life they saw
Service of toil and striving for thy gain:
The Muse's pensioners in death they lie.
They cherish'd thee through bitter strife and strain,
Faithful. They fought the zealous heretic,
Rapt Wyclif, zealously to guard their Truth. . . .
Nor worthy less were they who serv'd the sick
'Mid hopeless plague, and rifled Nature's store
To bless mankind: nor who for creed or king
Chang'd learning's mantle for the arms of war,
Their lives and treasuries surrendering.
Martyrs and saints have dower'd thee: one in Truth,
Old Faith, new Hope, have died to save or mar
The idols of flown ages; for Truth's sun
Shines glad alike upon all enterprise
That in the Father's eyes
Flatters the fledgling soul till the pure heights be won.

These golden memories sit round thy throne—
They are all thine; and thou art all my own.

R. W. Sterling.

LXXX

An Oxford Retrospect: May 1915

(To R. W. L.)

MAY!—and I am no more among your spires,
Dear Mother-city of my soul.
May!—and my heart hath new desires,
My spirit seeks another goal.

The lilac purples in the meadows green,
The avenues of elms I walked between
Cast over Christ Church walk their welcome shade.
Now in the College garden tulips tall
Nod to the gnarled wistaria on the wall,
And bright laburnum clusters gild the glade.

Now livid snakesheads bloom in Iffley mead,
And golden king-cups and pale cuckoo-weed,
That children gather against market-day.
O'er the cloud-dappled Cumnor hills the shade
Chases the sunlight—there I oft have strayed
And watched dun milch-cows munch the hours away.

The river flows as ever 'neath the trees,
But I no longer take thereon my ease

Where a pink hawthorn overhangs the stream.
Ah! lazy, languid idlings on the Cher,
Sweet lotus-eatings, while my soul ranged far,
In empty musing, through a vain day-dream.

Ah! days of yester-year, whose hours flew by,
As winds blow past the tent wherein I lie,
Heedless I let you go nor knew your span.
And yet—I would not have you back again,
Even amid the misery and pain
That now is making of the boy a man.

Next May!—And if I lie in some cold grave
Dear Mother-city of my soul,
I am content to yield the life you gave
If but I nobly reach the goal.

DYNELY HUSSEY.

LXXXI

A Dream of New College: to a College Comrade

IN dream I saw the men whom once I knew,
Whom in the by-gone year the Teuton slew,
Or Turk or Bulgar—those who sacrificed
Their lives and all for which their lives they prized—
And they were met as in the happier time
Before the first act of imperial crime,
Within a College garden in the shade
Of what was once a rampart undecayed.
They saw me not: and all were silent; each
Seemed lost in pondering too deep for speech,
As if, though undisdainful, they had nought
To utter for the modes of human thought,
And yet perchance they thought as one would fain
Imagine that they thought, returned again
To find the sacredness of quiet hours
And beauty, time-unravaged, near these towers.
Into the still quadrangle, as one is fain
To bear a cherished poem in the brain,
And music and great phrases that are dear.
Or one might pause—though 'twere not wise—to hear

The old clock's tireless ticking (I have known
Into a terror grow that monotone
Incessant, threatening, like the unchanging tune,
Learnt long ago, an idiot will croon,
Or, to a murderer, dazed, the judge's slow
Announcing of his near and ultimate woe):
The soul would wake to sadness and the moan
(As of a wind when woods are overthrown)
Of our great lamentation; and the mind
Remember those who nevermore may find
This quietude, or, borne upon the blast
Of death, the frontiers of the world have passed.
So the unopened door, the empty chair,
The half-filled ledger, and the table bare
Of books and paper, sad and strange would seem
To one thus hearkening in the sunlight's gleam,
As to the priests of Rome both strange and sad
Would seem the unsought temple, when the glad
Tidings of joy found welcome and men turned
To those whom beasts had torn or flames had burned.
In truth, they seem contented to have died
In combat against Power deified,
Glad that the men of future days might see
Inviolate this beauty's sanctity.
As if this College with the gardens old
An emblem of all beauty they did hold,
Created or to be, if but the soul
Of England shall escape a cursed control.
But at the waking hour I knew that all

Was but the mind's creation at the call
Of pent-up longings: yet I saw for long
That vision sweet as hymn of evensong.
I knew they sought not that, their duty done,
We should have sorrow beyond guerison,
And yet I felt an anguish of regret
To have imagined only that they met.

ALEXANDER ROBERTSON.

Chivalry of Sport

LXXXII

The Soldier's Game

Pluck, endurance, submission to discipline, good temper, calmness, judgment, quickness of observation, self-control, are all qualities as essential in a good polo player as in a good soldier.—*Badminton Library—Polo.*

HERE'S a song of the game we play
Out on the burnt maidân,
Right from Poona to Mandalay,
"Trichy" to far Mooltan.

Sahib and Jemadar here may meet:
Victory's laurels rest
Still with the daring, bold, and fleet
Sons of the East or West.

Rules of precedence too we doff,
Etiquette's self is blind;
Subalterns ride their Colonel off,
Nor does the Colonel mind.

Here's a verse for the steeds we ride,
Never a swerve or flinch,
Hunter's strength with a racehorse stride,
Fourteen hands and an inch.

Arab, and Waler, and country-bred,
Chestnut, and brown, and bay,
Sloping shoulder and lean game head,
Built to gallop and stay.

Here's to the "one" who'll never shirk,
Doing the thing he's told.
Here's to the "three" who knows his work
Resolute, safe, and bold.

Here's to the "back's" unerring aim
Never a moment late.
Here's to the man who wins the game
Galloping hard and straight.

Blinding and dense the dust-clouds roll,
Little the horsemen mind,
Racing hard for the distant goal,
Thunder of hoofs behind;

On to the ball when the pace is quick,
Galloping all the way,
Stirrup to stirrup and stick to stick—
God, what a game to play!

This is the law that mayn't be broke,
This is our chiefest pride;
Never a single selfish stroke,
Every man for the side.

This is the toast we love to drink,
Every night the same,
Bumpers all! and the glasses clink,
"Here's to the Soldier's Game!"

GEORGE U. ROBINS.

LXXXIII

Racing Rhymes

HAVE you felt the joy that is almost fear
As you face the ditch and are two lengths clear,
And you hear the thunder of hoofs in rear?
There is just a second when you may see
Clear out what the consequence will be—
If you go too close or take off too far
Comes a rending crash and a sickening jar,
A futile arm that you raise to defend,
And the battering hoofs that bring the end.

You are stride for stride, and you set your lip
As you urge with your heel and raise your whip,
And the moment he feels the whipcord sting
He leaps from the track with a glorious spring.
You hear the crash as the stout birch sunders,
And gain a length as your rival blunders.

COLWYN PHILLIPS.

LXXXIV

The River Bathe

WHEN the messenger sunbeam over your bed
Silently creeps in the morn;
And the dew-drops glitter on flower and tree,
Like the tears of hope new-born;
When the clouds race by in the painted sky
And the wind has a merry tune:
Ah! then for the joy of an early dip
In the glorious pools of Lune!

Up! up from your bed! Let the sluggards lie
In an airy palace of dreams,
Respond to the joyous lapwing's call
And the song of the burbling streams!
Oh, balmy the air, and wondrous fair
Are the hills with sunlight crowned,
And all the voices of nature seem
To mingle in one glad sound.

Then hurry along, for as light as the heart
Are the feet on a morning in June,
To the banks that are speckled with sunshine and shade,
'Neath the guardian trees of Lune,

Where the eddies play with the rocks all day
  In a whirl of fretful fun,
And the wavelet kisses the pebbly shore
  With a mirrored smile from the sun.

A good brave plunge in the crystal cool
  Of this grand primeval tub:
Then glowing you stand on the warm dry rocks
  By the edge of the foaming Dub.
Then homeward along, like the soul of a song
  That has every note in tune;
And dear will the memory always be
  Of the glorious pools of Lune.

R. W. Sterling.

LXXXV

To a Black Greyhound

SHINING black in the shining light,
Inky black in the golden sun,
Graceful as the swallow's flight,
Light as swallow, wingèd one,
Swift as driven hurricane—
Double-sinewed stretch and spring,
Muffled thud of flying feet,
See the black dog galloping,
Hear his wild foot-beat.

See him lie when the day is dead,
Black curves curled on the boarded floor.
Sleepy eyes, my sleepy-head—
Eyes that were aflame before.
Gentle now, they burn no more;
Gentle now and softly warm,
With the fire that made them bright
Hidden—as when after storm
Softly falls the night.

God of speed, who makes the fire—
  God of Peace, who lulls the same—
God who gives the fierce desire,
  Lust for blood as fierce as flame—
God who stands in Pity's name—
  Many may ye be or less,
Ye who rule the earth and sun:
  Gods of strength and gentleness,
  Ye are ever one.

JULIAN GRENFELL.

LXXXVI

Hymn to the Wild Boar

GOD gave the horse for man to ride,
And steel wherewith to fight,
And wine to swell his soul with pride
And women for delight:
But a better gift than these all four
Was when He made the fighting boar.

The horse is filled with spirit rare,
His heart is bold and free;
The bright steel flashes in the air,
And glitters hungrily.
But these were little use before
The Lord He made the fighting boar.

The ruby wine doth banish care,
But it confounds the head;
The fickle fair is light as air,
And makes the heart bleed red;
But wine nor love can tempt us more
When we may hunt the fighting boar.

When Noah's big monsoon was laid,
  The land began to ride again,
And then the first hog-spear was made
  By the hands of Tubal Cain;
The sons of Shem and many more
Came out to ride the fighting boar.

Those ancient Jew boys went like stinks,
  They knew not reck nor fear,
Old Noah knocked the first two jinks.
  And Nimrod got the spear.
And ever since those times of yore
True men do ride the fighting boar.

JULIAN GRENFELL.

LXXXVII

Ivinghoe Hill

HERE, where three counties join hands in alliance,
Terrace on terrace and glade upon glade,
Ashridge looms up like a keep of the giants,
Buttressed with beech woods from Aldbury to Gade.
Northwards the vale stretches smiling and spacious,
Spurs of the Chilterns the far distance fill;
Never held dreamland a prospect more gracious:
Sunlight and shadow on Ivinghoe hill.

Here, uneffaced by two thousand years' weather,
Scarred on the chalk down and stamped in the clay,
Linking the Eastland and Westland together,
Runs the long line of the great Icknield Way.
Here, in the days of the dawning of history,
Marched the Iceni to plunder and kill;
Over it all hangs the glamour of mystery:
Shades of the past under Ivinghoe hill.

Yonder's the knoll where the beacon was lighted,
Northward and eastward the red message runs:
"Philip's tall ships in the Channel are sighted;
Arm, for your country hath need of her sons!"

Straightway they rose and flung back the Armada.
Lives the same spirit within our hearts still?
Can England muster such champions to guard her?
Mists of the future round Ivinghoe hill.

Hush! A brown form through the gorse stems is stealing,
Off to the vale with a wave of his brush!
Heedless of aught that the future's concealing,
Back to the present we come with a rush.
One ringing shout to the horsemen who follow,
Waking the woods till they echo and thrill;
Now the horn answers: Hark holloa! hark holloa!
Huntsman and hound upon Ivinghoe hill.

GEORGE U. ROBINS.

LXXXVIII

Cricket: the Catch

WHIZZING, fierce, it came
Down the summer air,
Burning like a flame
On my fingers bare,
And it brought to me
As swift—a memory.

Happy days long dead
Clear I saw once more.
Childhood that is fled:—
Rossall on the shore,
Where the sea sobs wild
Like a homesick child.

Oh, the blue bird's fled!
Never man can follow.
Yet at times instead
Comes this scarlet swallow,
Bearing on its wings
(Where it skims and dips,
Gleaming through the slips)
Sweet Time-strangled things.

F. W. HARVEY.

LXXXIX

Rugby Football

(Written on receiving the Football Match List from Ilkley Grammar School)

YOU came by last night's mail
To my strange little mud-built house,
At a time when the blues were on my trail
And I'd little to do but grouse.
For the world seemed a-swim with ooze,
With everything going wrong,
And though I knew that we couldn't lose,
Yet the end of it all seemed long.
The sandbag bed felt hard,
And exceedingly cold the rain,
But you sang to me, little green card,
And gave me courage again;
For at sight of the old green back
And the dear familiar crest,
I was off and away on memory's track,
Where Rumbold's Moor stands bleak and black
And the plaintive curlews nest.

Then, thin and clear, I seemed to hear—
  Now low and sweet, now high and strong—
A note of cheer to banish fear;
  The little card sang thus his song.

The Song

There's a broad green field in a broad green vale,
  There's a bounding ball and a straining pack;
There's a clean cold wind blowing half a gale,
  There's a strong defence and a swift attack.
There's a roar from the "touch" like an angry sea,
  As the struggle wavers from goal to goal;
But the fight is clean as a fight should be,
  And they're friends when the ball has ceased to roll.
Clean and keen is the grand old rule,
  And heart and courage must never fail.
They are making men where the grey stone school
  Looks out on the broad green vale.
    Can you hear the call? Can you hear the call?
    Now, School! Now, School! Play up!
There's many a knock and many a fall
For those who follow a Rugger ball;
But hark!—can you hear it? Over all—
    Now, School! Now, School! Play up!

She makes her men and she sends them forth,
  O proud old mother of many sons!
The Ilkley breed has proved its worth
  Wherever the bond of Empire runs;

But near or far the summons clear
  Has sought them out from town and heath,
They've met the foeman with a cheer,
  And face to face have smiled on death.
They are fighting still to the grand old rule,
  That heart and courage must never fail—
If they fall, there are more where the grey stone school
  Looks out on the broad green vale.
    Can you hear the call? Can you hear the call
    That drowns the roar of Krupp?
There are many who fight and many who fall
Where the big guns play at the Kaiser's ball,
But hark!—can you hear it? Over all—
    Now, School! Now, School! Play up!

So when old age has won the fight
  That godlike youth can never win,
The mind turns from the coming night,
  To boyish visions flooding in;
And by the hearth the old man dreams
  Of school and all it meant to him,
Till in the firelight's kindly beams
  The wise old eyes grow very dim.
But he's lived his life to the grand old rule
  That heart and courage must never fail;
So he lifts his glass to the grey stone school
  That looks on the broad green vale.
    Can you hear the call? Can you hear the call?
    Here's a toast, now! Fill the cup!

Though the shadow of fate is on the wall,
Here's a final toast ere the darkness fall—
"The days of our boyhood—best of all!"
Now, School! Now, School! Play up!

ERIC WILKINSON.

The Ghostly Company

XC

The Home-coming

WHEN this blast is over-blown,
And the beacon fires shall burn
And in the street
Is the sound of feet—
They also shall return.

When the bells shall rock and ring,
When the flags shall flutter free,
And the choirs shall sing,
"God save our King"—
They shall be there to see.

When the brazen bands shall play,
And the silver trumpets blow,
And the soldiers come
To the tuck of drum—
They shall be there also.

When that which was lost is found;
When each shall have claimed his kin,
Fear not they shall miss
Mother's clasp, maiden's kiss—
For no strange soil might hold them in.

When Te Deums seek the skies,
When the Organ shakes the Dome,
A dead man shall stand
At each live man's hand—
For they also have come home.

JOSEPH LEE.

XCI

The Army of Death

WHEN you see millions of the mouthless dead
Across your dreams in pale battalions go,
Say not soft things as other men have said,
That you'll remember. For you need not so.
Give them not praise. For, deaf, how should they know
It is not curses heaped on each gashed head?
Nor tears. Their blind eyes see not your tears flow.
Nor honour. It is easy to be dead.
Say only this, "They are dead." Then add thereto,
"Yet many a better one has died before."
Then, scanning all the o'ercrowded mass, should you
Perceive one face that you loved heretofore,
It is a spook. None wears the face you knew.
Great death has made all his for evermore.

CHARLES HAMILTON SORLEY.

XCII

Cha Till Maccruimein

DEPARTURE OF THE 4TH CAMERONS

THE pipes in the streets were playing bravely,
The marching lads went by,
With merry hearts and voices singing
My friends marched out to die;
But I was hearing a lonely pibroch
Out of an older war,
"Farewell, farewell, farewell, MacCrimmon,
MacCrimmon comes no more."

And every lad in his heart was dreaming
Of honour and wealth to come,
And honour and noble pride were calling
To the tune of the pipes and drum;
But I was hearing a woman singing
On dark Dunvegan shore,
"In battle or peace, with wealth or honour,
MacCrimmon comes no more."

And there in front of the men were marching,
With feet that made no mark,
The grey old ghosts of the ancient fighters
Come back again from the dark;

And in front of them all MacCrimmon piping
A weary tune and sore,
"On the gathering day, for ever and ever,
MacCrimmon comes no more."

E. A. Mackintosh.

XCIII

Ghosts

(Flanders, 1915)

BY rosy woodlands all aglow
With autumn, slow-consuming fire,
By dintling brooks that broaden now,
By hill and hollow and mead and mire,
By farms mid all their yellow ricks
From ivied chimney smoking blue,
And by the lofty kiln where bricks
Stand piled in cubes so red and new,
By queer thatched hamlets all askew,
And by the little unbusy town
Around the grey spire that we knew,
We pass again, but all unknown.

Again we guide the jolting plough
Or bake the brittle, tinting clay;
But none will mark our labour now,
Urge as we will, toil as we may.

Willoughby Weaving.

XCIV

Easter Even

EVENING steals on in stillness o'er the heath,
Across the blue-green sky and fire-tinged clouds,
And silent birds wing homewards; misty shrouds
Rise to the hilltops from the vales beneath;

And far away against the eastern sky
Stand silhouetted pine-trees on a hill,
Sharp, rugged shapes, so very black and still,
Like memories dear of childhood storèd by.

An awful silence, like a deep-tongued bell
Reverberent about me as I stand,
Its holy mantle sheds upon the land;
I dare not move, lest I should break the spell.

. . . .

Then many friendly voices spake with me,
Voices no longer framed by lips of flesh,
Voices whose noted tones rang strangely fresh,
Transfigured, instinct with new harmony:

And I did weep to think that these had died,
That I should hold no more their clasping hands,
Which now are blent with dust of foreign lands;
"But mourn not us; we are content," they cried;

"Rejoicing we went forth, and loud in song,
Ready to suffer all things, or to die
If Fate so willed it; but our hopes were high;
We went forth steadfast to our will and strong.

"And some of us return not, but remain
In close-dug graves o'ergrown with simple flowers,
Tended by gentle winds, washed with soft showers,
Lulled on earth's bosom to forget our pain.

"But comfort these, and on their foreheads lay
Cool hands of consolation, that they sleep,
And so forget the cause for which they weep
In happy dreamlessness until the day."

Then I saw many mothers grieving sore,
With sad, bowed heads, hot eyes devoid of tears;
Some young, unblemished, some grown grey with years,
Lone mothers mourning for the sons they bore.

But they were bravely desolate; to speak
Soft words of comfort, hopeful of relief
Seemed but an insult to their quiet grief;
In face of such a sorrow words are weak.

"Yet this, O mothers, take for comforting:
We suffer and not they; the glorious dead
Are now at peace from Hate and Fear," I said;
"That day they died, they vanquished suffering.

"Therefore rejoice with them; for not in vain
They gave the virgin glory of their youth,
That evil should not overcome, that truth
Might not be trampled for a tyrant's gain."

Then in the air about me ever close
Strange Things unheard, impalpable, unseen,
Dimly perceived, danced statelily between
Heaven and earth; and a great tumult rose,

The rushing horror of a thousand wings,
And intermingling voices of sweet praise,
Of men rejoicing, that had trod the ways
Of terror, and triumphant faced Death's stings.

And all those mourners, that were on the earth,
Raised suppliant arms as o'er a sacrifice,
And with brave eyes exultant gave the price
Of victory—the sons they brought to birth.

. . . . .

Then suddenly the sudden voices cease,
And high above shines out the evening star,
Shedding its ray of love and hope afar,
And on the stricken earth descendeth peace.

DYNELY HUSSEY.

XCV

The Half-hour's Furlough

I THOUGHT that a man went home last night
From the trench where the tired men lie,
And walked through the streets of his own old town—
And I thought that man was I.

And I walked through the gates of that good old town
Which circles below the hill,
And laves its feet in the river fair
That floweth so full and still.

Gladly and gladly into my heart
Came the old street sounds and sights,
And pleasanter far than the Pleiades
Was the gleam of the old street lights.

And as I came by St. Mary's Tower,
The old, solemn bell struck ten,
And back to me echoed the memory
Of my boyhood days again:
Musing I turned me east about
To the haunt of my fellow-men.

There were some that walked, and some that talked,
Beneath the old Arcade,
And for comfort I elbowed among the throng
And hearkened to what they said.

Some were that talked, and some that walked
By one, by two, by three;
And some there were who spake my name
As though they lovèd me.

And some who said, "Might he but return
When this weary war is spent!"
And it moved me much that their thought was such,
And I turned me well content.

I passed me along each familiar way,
And paused at each friendly door,
And thought of the things that had chanced within
In the kindly days of yore.

Till I came to the place of my long, long love,
Where she lay with her head on her arm;
And she sighed a prayer that the dear Lord should
Shield my body from all harm.

Ae kiss I left on her snow-white brow,
And ane on her raven hair,
And ane, the last, on her ruby lips,
Syne forth again I fare.

And I came to the home that will ay be home,
  And brightly the fires did burn,
And at hearth, and in hearts, was a place for me
  'Gainst the day that I should return.

Then I came to the glade where my mother was laid,
  'Neath the cypress and the yew:
And she stood abune, and she said, "My son,
  I am glad that your heart was true."

And I passed me over both hill and down,
  By each well-remembered path,
While the blessèd dawn, like the love o' God,
  Stole over the sleeping Strath.

And from a thorn came the pipe of a thrush,
  Like the first faint pipes of Peace:
It slid with healing into my heart,
  And my sorrowing found surcease.

. . . . .

Then I awoke to the sound of guns,
  And in my ears was the cry:
"The Second Relief will stand to arms!"
  And I rose—for that man was I.

JOSEPH LEE.

XCVI

The Sleep of Death

WE see no terror in your eyes.
They say that sleeping you were found;
Now we with bayonets guard you round.
Night's shadow up the hillside creeps,
But you still watch the lighted skies,
Although the sentinel that sleeps
The next dawn dies.

Ah, the remorse is gone that grew
To think of what my comrade said:
"Give this to her when I am dead"—
A heart-shaped thing of little worth
That held her picture for his view,
But he was killed and in the earth
Before I knew.

It was last night. My watch I kept,
The stars just overhead shone dim.
Nought moved upon the hills' far rim.
But in the hollows shadows seethed,
And as I watched, towards me crept.
I listened: deep my comrades breathed
Where near they slept.

Below men moved innumerable—
Fancy! and yet there was a doubt.
I closed my eyes to shut them out,
And for relief drew deeper breath,
  Across my lids Sleep laid his spell;
I flung it off—to sleep was death,
  I knew too well.

There came a pleasant breath of air,
Cool—wafted from the stars it seemed.
I looked: now they all brightly gleamed,
Then long I watched, alert, clear-eyed.
  No sleeper stirred behind me there. . . .
Yet then of some one at my side
  I grew aware.

I stared: for he stood there, though dead,
Yet looking, that seemed nothing strange;
About his form there was no change
To see within that little light.
" 'Tis I. And yet you heard no tread.
A careless watch you keep to-night,"
  He laughing said.

His voice no huskier had grown,
Then while I watched, he sat and told
Me of his love just as of old.
"Give this to her," I heard him say.
I looked, and found I was alone.
Within my hand the locket lay
  Cold as a stone.

I have it here to prove he lies
Who says that sleeping I was found.
I fear not though you guard me round.
Night's shadow up the hillside creeps,
  But I can watch the lighted skies,
Although the sentinel that sleeps
  The next dawn dies.

HARLEY MATTHEWS.

Songs

XCVII

The Soldier Speaks

WITHIN my heart I safely keep,
England, what things are yours:
Your clouds, and cloud-like flocks of sheep
That drift o'er windy moors.
Possessing naught, I proudly hold
Great hills and little, gay
Hill-towns set black on sunrise-gold
At breaking of the day.

Though unto me you be austere
And loveless, darling land;
Though you be cold and hard, my dear,
And will not understand,
Yet have I fought and bled for you,
And, by that self-same sign,
Still must I love you, yearn to you,
England—how truly mine!

F. W. Harvey.

XCVIII

The Drum

"Come to me, and I will give you flesh"
OLD PIBROCHADH.

COME!
Says the drum;
Though graves be hollow,
Yet follow, follow:
Come!
Says the drum.

Life!
Shrills the fife,
Is in strife—
Leave love and wife:
Come!
Says the drum.

Ripe!
Screams the pipe,
Is the field—
Swords and not sickles wield:
Come!
Says the drum.

The drum
Says, Come!
    Though graves be hollow,
    Yet follow, follow:
Come!
Says the drum.

JOSEPH LEE.

XCIX

Home-coming

THERE is peace in this house,
He is come again;
He is here, he is close,
He, for whom they were fain;
There is peace in this house.

There is gladness and joy
For the safe return
Of this man, that was boy
Ere the year did turn;
There is gladness and joy.

There is sorrow to tell
For his grim-born pain;
He went down into hell,
Saw his comrades slain;
There is sorrow as well.

Above all, there is pride
  For the deeds he wrought;
He would gladly have died,
  Could his life purchase aught;
There is pride! There is pride!

DYNELY HUSSEY.

C

In Flanders

I'M homesick for my hills again—
My hills again!
To see above the Severn plain,
Unscabbarded against the sky,
The blue high blade of Cotswold lie;
The giant clouds go royally
By jagged Malvern with a train
Of shadows. Where the land is low
Like a huge imprisoning O
I hear a heart that's sound and high,
I hear the heart within me cry:
"I'm homesick for my hills again—
My hills again!
Cotswold or Malvern, sun or rain!
My hills again!"

F. W. Harvey.

CI

The Broken Heart

I FOUND a silver sixpence,
A sixpence, a sixpence,
I found a silver sixpence,
And I brake it in twa;
I gied it till a sodger,
A sodger, a sodger,
I gied it till a sodger,
Before he gaed awa'.

I have a heart that's broken,
That's broken, that's broken;
I bear a heart that's broken,
That's broken in twa—
For I gied it till a sodger,
A sodger, a sodger,
I gied it till a sodger,
Before he gaed awa'!

JOSEPH LEE.

CII

The Willow-tree Bough

MY heart's at the war with a good-natured rifleman
Where he stands firing his foemen to slay:
While he was home with us, laughter and liveliness—
Night time or church time 'twas all holiday.
Friends who fall in with a good-natured rifleman
Tell him his Helen abides by her vow
Just as she swore when her William, last January,
Carved his sweet name on the willow-tree bough.

He's got moustaches, a good-natured rifleman,
Curled at each end like the fiery young moon,
Yes, and he marches so deft and delightfully,
All the old streets here still echo the tune.
Now that he's given himself up for a soldier,
All over the world his brave body to show,
How can you wonder that I in my anxiousness
Weep with my eyes on the willow-tree bough?

Here's to their health, the green-jacketed gentlemen,
Scouring their enemies over the plain,
Fighting like seals in a lickerish estuary
Soon may old Winchester see them again—

Soon may the children, are yet to be born to me,
  Standing around like young shoots in a row,
Hark to the eldest one spelling so easily
  Worm-eaten words on the willow-tree bough.

CHARLES SCOTT-MONCRIEFF.

CIII

Low Germany

To be Sung to the Tune of "High Germany"

NO more the English girls may go
To follow with the drum,
But still they flock together
To see the soldiers come;
For horse and foot are marching by,
And the bold artillery:
They're going to the cruel wars
In Low Germany.

They're marching down by lane and town
And they are hot and dry,
But as they marched together
I heard the soldiers cry:
"Oh all of us, both horse and foot,
And the proud artillery,
We're going to the merry wars
In Low Germany."

Edward Shanks.

Loving and Living

CIV

To Mother

CAN I make my feeble art
  Show the burning of my heart?
Five-and-twenty years of schooling
Since you bore me, weak and puling,
Every day and every hour
I have battened on your power,
  While you taught of life the whole;
You my Best Beloved and nighest,
You who ever claimed the highest
  Was the one and only goal.
Often weary, often ailing,
Never for a moment failing,
Always cheering, always propping,
Often checking, sometimes stopping,
When the sands of life seemed sliding
You were helping, you were guiding—
  Claimed for me the glorious rôle:
You my loved one and no other,
You my only lovely Mother,
  You the pilot of my soul.

COLWYN PHILIPPS.

CV

Mother's Birthday

IT was good to be alive on mother's Birthday,
It was good to shake off sleepiness and rise,
It was good to throw the legs across my pony
And to drink the morning sunlight with the eyes.

It was good to take the road on mother's Birthday
As old "Bob" kicked up his heels and ran away,
It was good to trot him back into his stable
And to play with "Ginger" till he got his hay.

It was good to have my bath on mothers Birthday
And to swill the water cold all down the back,
It was good to shave and wash and put on khaki
And kneel and ask that mother has no lack.

It was good to up and out on mother's Birthday,
And to join the merry fellows in the mess.
It was good to toast the bread for early breakfast
And enjoy myself a little none the less!

It was good to see the works on mother's Birthday
And to have a look how things were going on,
It was good to see the carpenters and sawyers
And the engines and the horses pulling strong.

It was good to see the shops on mother's Birthday,
And the blacksmiths at the anvil and the forge,
And the fitters and the masons and the plumbers,
Busy tradesmen, trusty soldiers of King George

It was good to see the field on mother's Birthday,
It was good to feel the sunshine and the breeze,
It was good to see the water in the river,
And the flowers and the sparrows and the trees.

It was good to think of men on mother's Birthday,
Just the men you have to govern and to serve,
And to say that this must not be done or must be,
So that every man may offer every nerve.

It was good to walk the line on mother's Birthday
To the Hospital—along and back again,
It was good to see the nurses and the doctors
And to breathe a silent prayer for dying men.

It was good to drill the men on mother's Birthday,
All the company in column in the field.
It was good to see their arms were clean and steady,
And to see them marching firmly as they wheeled.

It was good to pay the men on mother's Birthday,
And to give them but an earnest of their due,
And to see them playing Footer in the evening,
Just to keep their bodies manly, strong, and true.

It was good to have a rest on mother's Birthday,
In the evening when the daytime's work was done.
It was good to sit and look across to mother,
And to contemplate the rest when it is won.

It was good to go to sleep on mother's Birthday,
And to let the tired body take its ease,
And to dream of dreamy, long-forgotten spring days
When a little body lay on mother's knees.

Only every man has not a mother's Birthday,
No one ever had a mother just like mine!
It was good to be alive on mother's Birthday,
Son of Mary—Mother, gentle and divine.

H. S. GRAHAM.*

* When the author told the "Padre" that this piece seemed only doggerel, he said it didn't matter if it was.

CVI

The Bonny, Bonny Braes

I

LONELY I linger'd when you went,
Recalling how the days had fled
Each with its mingled treasure pent
Of shine and shade rememberèd . . .
Oh, how I crush'd the grapes divine,
Blending a flood of wakeful wine.

Next look'd I on the well-lov'd scene,
Eager its ready wealth to glean:
And forg'd therefrom a cup of gold—
Red hills, blue loch, and islands green—
(Rare alchemy!). So could it hold
That vintage of our joy, and I
Drink deep the draught of memory.

II

Love, be not sad but listen
To the laughter of the wave,
Sweeping ever madly after
His desire above yon cave:

See the leaping shingle glisten
With the fire his kisses gave—
Oh mingle, love, your laughter
With the laughter of the wave.

R. W. Sterling.

CVII

Suvla Bay

OLD rose and black and indigo,
Saffron streaks in a spume-tipped grey,
Purple, laved in the dawn's wan glow—
God, how fair you are, Suvla Bay!

Spitting shrapnel and shrieking steel,
Brave men dead in their youth's noonday,
All the anguish their loved ones feel
Is your ambrose, fair Suvla Bay!

Stabbing sun from a brazen sky,
Choking dust from the corpse-strewn way,
Each one treads as he marches by,—
God, how I loathe you, Suvla Bay!

Tanned men delving with laboured breath,
Stinking lighters discharging hay,
Grey-hulled battleships belching death,
God, there's work on at Suvla Bay!

Pale, pale moon and the cold north star,
You who watch while I kneel and pray,
Take to her in the northland far
One sobbing prayer from Suvla Bay!

One sobbing prayer that the dull heart-pain
God in heav'n Thou alone canst stay,
For her be stilled till I come again
Back to her side from Suvla Bay!

W. H. Littlejohn.

CVIII

I Love

I LOVE thee as I love the holiest things,
Like perfect poetry and angels' wings,
And cleanliness, and sacred motherhood,
And all things simple, sweetly pure, and good.
I love thee as I love a little child,
And calves and kittens, and all things soft and mild:
Things that I want to cuddle and to kiss,
And stroke and play with: dear, I love like this.
And, best of all, I love thee as a friend,
O fellow seeker of a mutual end!

COLWYN PHILIPPS.

CIX

To his Maid

SINCE above Time, upon Eternity
The lovely essence of true loving's set,
Time shall not triumph over you and me,
Nor—though we pay his debt—
Shall Death hold mastery.

Your eyes are bright for ever. Your dark hair
Holds an eternal shade. Like a bright sword
Shall flame the vision of your strange sweet ways,
Cleaving the years: and even your smallest word
Lying forgotten with the things that were,
Shall glow and kindle, burning up the days.

F. W. HARVEY.

CX

The Barrier

A WALL and gulf for ever lie between,
Not all that we may do through love or wit
Can quite avail to pull away the screen,
Nor yet succeed in bridging o'er the pit.
He knows the reason, He that ordered it,
Who bade us love but never understand.
He fixed the barrier as He saw fit,
And bade us yearn and still stretch forth the hand
Across the very sea He'd said should ne'er be spanned.
But sure this great and aching love of mine,
That ever yearns to know and to be known,
Can tear the veil that sometimes seems so fine
As though 'twere cobweb waiting but the blow
To fall asunder and for ever go.
E'en as I rise to strike, it is too late,
The cobwebs billow, thicken, seem to grow
To a thick wall with buttress tall and great. . . .
I stand alone, a stranger at a city gate.

COLWYN PHILIPPS.

CXI

Rainbow

GOD built a bridge
  Across the sky
From ridge to ridge,
  And arched it high;
And made it bright
  Against the storm,
And wrought with light
  Its rounded form.

So leapt your love
  Across the sky
That loured above
  So hopelessly;
And at its end
  Of trembling light
You stand, O friend,
  Beyond my sight.

DYNELY HUSSEY.

CXII

Fulfilment

WAS there love once? I have forgotten her.
Was there grief once? Grief still is mine.
Other loves I have; men rough, but men who stir
More joy, more grief than love of thee and thine.

Faces cheerful, full of whimsical mirth,
Lined by the wind, burned by the sun;
Bodies enraptured by the abounding earth,
As whose children, brothers we are and one.

And any moment may descend hot death
To shatter limbs! pulp, tear, and blast
Belovèd soldiers who love rude life and breath
Not less for dying faithful to the last.

O the fading eyes, the grimèd face turned bony,
Oped, black, gushing mouth, fallen head,
Failing pressure of a held hand shrunk and stony,
O sudden spasm, release of the dead!

Was there love once? I have forgotten her.
Was there grief once? Grief still is mine.
O loved, living, dying, heroic soldier,
All, all my joy, my grief, my love are thine!

ROBERT NICHOLS.

CXIII

The Spirit of Womanhood

1. Sending

WHEN as of old the Spartan mother sent
Her best beloved to the perilous field,
One charge she laid upon him ere he went:
"Return, my son, or with or on thy shield."
Even so we, with anguish unrevealed
By eyes o'er-bright and lips to laughter lent,
Sent forth our men to battle, nor would yield
To tears by pride's fierce barriers hardly pent.

So when they fight and all the world goes red,
No memories athwart their souls shall come
That might unman them in the hour of need,
But such brave glances veiling hearts that bleed
As those old mothers turned upon their dead
On comrades' shoulders borne triumphant home.

2. Rebellion

WAS it for this, dear God, that they were born,
These sons of ours, the beautiful and brave,
To fall far from us, leaving us forlorn,
Scarce knowing even if they found a grave?

It comforts not that cheerfully they gave
Their lives for England; nay, to us, outworn
With grief, it skills but that they could not save
Themselves in saving her from shame and scorn.

Cometh no answer from the pitiless skies
To us in darkness for our lost ones weeping;
Their place is empty, empty as our hearts,
Or as our prayers unheeded, nor departs
The instant anguish: we but hush our cries
Lest they should trouble our belovèd sleeping.

3. *Peace*

Surely the bitterness of death is past,
Drained to the dregs the waters of despair,
Yea, pride on our belovèd shall outlast
All poor desiring for the things that were.
The men we wedded and the sons we bare
Died valiantly and for the right stood fast:
Yet 'twas our blood that made them strong to dare,
Our hearts that in the battle-scale were cast.

Light of our eyes for all the years to be,
Fruit of our dreams, our dearest selves fulfilled,
These have we laid as gifts on Freedom's altar
With blinding tears, yet all ungrudgingly;
Henceforth our high hearts shall not fail nor falter,
Though in them gladness be for ever stilled.

A. L. Jenkins.

CXIV

Any Soldier's Wife

I

LISTEN: going up the street
The echo of my soldier's feet.
A sound already growing dim
Is all I now can hold of him.
In this wide world that thinning sound—
First threat of lengthening miles of ground—
Is all the wealth I still possess,
My dwindling store of loveliness;
An ebbing tide, a fading ghost,
Poor wraith of all I cherish most.

The crownèd heart of love's delight
Is hunted out into the night:
A golden pinnacle of flame
Is turned to smoke—a sigh—a name:
The song of angels' dancing feet
Become an echo in the street. . . .
O dying sound, O scarce-drawn breath,
You whisper, fail; and then comes death.
Darkness: and no footstep more.
Turn, go in, and shut the door.

II

The lark springs up from sleepy earth
To dance and soar on wings of mirth,
Dull clouds are cleft, a crystal spire
Shoots up, the air is flaked with fire
As on he sweeps in radiant rings,
Wild music scattering from his wings.

O lark, I know you—lovely life
Unsapped by dual inward strife,
Whose perfect joy is speeding whole
In conscious rapture to your goal,
Who does not plan with downward eye
How far 'tis safe to sing and fly,
Nor heed fear's whisper bidding stoop:
"What now if hawk or kite should swoop?"

There is a time for ground and nest,
For voiceless joy and folded rest;
Only when song and flight are spent
Utterly, will you drop, content,
Your heart and love's heart wholly one
Because you did not fear to run
Across the unknown fields of space,
And take life's challenge face to face.

When I give all I have to give
I'll make no bargain that he live
To lie again upon this breast.
There is a time for ground and nest.

He'll come when he has flamed in flight
Across these heavy mists of night,
And, singing like the skylark, run
To greet a newly risen sun.

And I who watch and bless him forth,
Though he go south and I go north,
Would take with him the skyward way
And clamber up the stairs of day:
Pour life in careless jewelled flow,
Nor pause, nor plan, nor look below.

O small brave lark, O brother dear,
Sing to us through the next long year;
For life's adventurers are we,
And life calls you, and him, and me.

DOROTHY PLOWMAN.

Moods and Memories

CXV

The Listeners

THE guns!

Far, far away in the distance we hear them.
Oh, for a chance to be there, to be near them,
Borne on the wind in the stillness of night
Far-away sounds of the thunderous fight.
Guns!

Nightly ere sleeping our senses we strain,
Faintly we hear it—the muttered refrain.
Would we were free to be fighting again.
Hark to the guns!

Well do we know all the horrors of night,
Darkness made day by the calcium light,
Nothing but wreckage revealed to the sight.
Hark to the guns!

Yet would we break inactivity's spell
Just for one night in that shuddering hell,
Thunder of guns and the scream of the shell.
Hark to the guns!

The guns!
Breathless we wait for the news of the fray,
News of the guns that are nearer to-day.
Nearer they mutter, they thunder, they roll!
Nearer to victory, nearer their goal.
Guns!

J. M. Rose-Troup.

Weilburg a. d. Lahn,
May 1916.

CXVI

Outposts

WHEN the moonlit shadows creep,
When the sun beats pitiless down,
Steadfast, vigilant they keep
Watch and ward about the town.

Guardians of an Empire's gate,
In the sunshine and the dust
Still beside their guns they wait,
Faithful to their weary trust.

Not for them the hero's cross,
Not for them the hero's grave,
Thrill of victory, pain of loss,
Praise of those they fell to save.

Only days of monotone,
Sand and fever, flies and fret,
All unheeded and unknown,
Little thanks they're like to get.

Yet mayhap in after-days
—Distant eye the clearer sees—
Gods apportioning the praise
Shall be kindly unto these.

A. L. JENKINS.

ADEN, 1916.

CXVII

Tears

SILENCE o'erwhelms the melody of Night,
Then slowly drips on to the woods that sigh
For their past vivid vernal ecstasy.
The branches and the leaves let in the light
In patterns, woven 'gainst the paler sky
—Create mysterious Gothic tracery,
Between those high dark pillars,—that affright
Poor weary mortals who are wand'ring by.

. . . . .

Silence drips on the woods like sad faint rain,
Making each frail tired sigh, a sob of pain:
Each drop that falls, a hollow painted tear
Such as are shed by Pierrots, when they fear
Black clouds may crush their silver lord to death.
The world is waxen; and the wind's least breath
Would make a hurricane of sound. The earth
Smells of the hoarded sunlight that gave birth
To the gold-glowing radiance of that leaf,
Which falls to bury from our sight its grief.

OSBERT SITWELL.

CXVIII

The Tryst

I

THERE was a peace at eve no other hour
Knows of: the east, a dusken tapestry of yellow light
Woven with feathers from the wings of birds in flight,
Curtained the presence of an unseen Power.

I stood between deep ranks of pillaring pine
In a small glade, and up above a cupola more deep
Recessed into the blueness of the sky. All wrapped in sleep
Save the unresting vigil of starshine.

And then I called on God. The pinetops kissed,
The sky was suddenly disturbed, vague eddies in the air
Scattered night-perfumes, cloud-sheets raced, grass rustled everywhere,
Nature made preparation for that mighty tryst.

II

CLUTCHING thine hand, sweet Death, my tranquil friend,
And nestling close to thee, I shall have power
To rest uninjured by the transient hour,
Knowing my end.

I shall be held above the eddying tide
Into a sunlit quiet, and thence hide
With but an outstretched palm the wearying crowd,
'Twixt whom and God a gulf unknownly wide
Is fixed, to drown their littlenesses loud.
Blow forth, Death's herald, from thy silver horn
Strains sweeter far than birds a-song at morn.

. . . . .

III

i

All day he moved not, lying low amid
The cool fresh odorous grass. He heard the trill
Of water leaping somewhere shadow-hid,
And in unfettered rapture drank his fill
Of deep rose odour, till sleep stole unbid
Upon him, with the music of the rill.

ii

He woke in darkness. 'Twixt him and the skies
Darted the black things of the middle night—
While all around broke shrill and tragic cries
As of hope dead, and fancy put to flight.
And somewhere, hidden from his burning eyes,
Cold dropping water set his heart affright.

A. J.

CXIX

The Warrior Month

STRONG March, what wonder that I think of war
When thou art triumphing across the sky
With bannered cloud and trump of victory
Bloodless, and not as our red triumphs are,
And in thy happy conquest spreading far
The Spring's green welcome ravage, biddest fly
Those dull oppressors of the land, the sly
Old monarch Winter and his consort Care.

A happy gain to all, a loss to none!
But we, how great soe'er our triumphs be
Ever gain less than we have lost alone,
And less than even our broken enemy
Get from the thought how their brave dead have known
Nought of their country's dire calamity.

WILLOUGHBY WEAVING.

CXX

Back in Billets

WE'RE in billets again, and to-night, if you please,
I shall strap myself up in a Wolsey valise.
What's that, boy? Your boots give you infinite pain?
You can chuck them away: we're in billets again.

We're in billets again now and, barring alarms,
There'll be no occasion for standing to arms,
And you'll find if you'd many night-watches to keep
That the hour before daylight's the best hour for sleep.

We're feasting on chocolate, cake, currant buns,
To a faint German-band obligato of guns,
For I've noticed, wherever the regiment may go,
That we always end up pretty close to the foe.

But we're safe out of reach of trench mortars and snipers
Five inches south-west of the "Esses" in Ypres;
—Old Bob, who knows better, pronounces it Yper
But don't argue the point now—you'll waken the sleeper.

Our host brings us beer up, our thirst for to quench,
So we'll drink him good fortune in English and French:

—Bob, who finds my Parisian accent a blemish,
Goes one better himself in a torrent of Flemish.

It's a fortnight on Friday since Christopher died,
And John's at Boulogne with a hole in his side,
While poor Harry's got lost, the Lord only knows where;—
May the Lord keep them all and ourselves in His care.

. . . Mustn't think we don't mind when a chap gets laid out,
They've taken the best of us, never a doubt;
But with life pretty busy and death rather near
We've no time for regret any more than for fear.

. . . Here's a health to our host, Isidore Deschildre,
Himself and his wife and their plentiful childer,
And the brave *aboyeur* who bays our return;
More power to his paws when he treads by the churn!

You may speak of the Ritz or the Curzon (Mayfair)
And maintain that they keep you in luxury there:
If you've lain for six weeks on a water-logged plain,
Here's the acme of comfort, in billets again.

CHARLES SCOTT-MONCRIEFF.

February 1915.

CXXI

Progress

AH Progress, what a sorry claim thou hast
To be accounted worthy of thy name!
Availing less than a weak candle-flame
Before our steady accusation's blast.
Thy life is forfeit—thou that never wast
More than a word between the lips of shame,
A subtle lie that so like truth became,
That all unknown our skies grew overcast!

The mind triumphant—making hideous war,
A reeking shambles all impossible,
Yet luring on the nations near and far
To that red end? Arise, ye dead, and tell
How in our hate we hate no less than ye,
And in our love love not more tenderly.

WILLOUGHBY WEAVING.

CXXII

The Hills

MUSSOORIE and Chakrata Hill
The Jumna flows between;
And from Chakrata's hills afar
Mussoorie's vale is seen.
The mountains sing together
In cloud or sunny weather,
The Jumna, through their tether,
Foams white, or plunges green.

The mountains stand and laugh at Time;
They pillar up the earth,
They watch the ages pass, they bring
New centuries to birth.
They feel the daybreak shiver,
They see Time passing ever
As flows the Jumna River,
As breaks the white sea-surf.

They drink the sun in a golden cup,
And in blue mist the rain;
With a sudden brightening they meet the lightning
Or ere it strikes the plain.

They seize the sullen thunder,
And take it up for plunder,
And cast it down and under,
  And up and back again.

They are as changeless as the rock,
  As changeful as the sea;
They rest, but as a lover rests
  After love's ecstasy.
They watch, as a true lover
Watches the quick lights hover
About the lids that cover
  His eyes so wearily.

Heaven lies upon their breasts at night,
  Heaven kisses them at dawn;
Heaven clasps and kisses them at even
  With fire of the sun's death born.
They turn to his desire
Their bosom, flushing higher
With soft receptive fire,
  And blushing, passion-torn.

Here, in the hills of ages
  I met thee face to face;
O mother Earth, O lover Earth,
  Look down on me with grace.

Give me thy passion burning,
And thy strong patience, turning
All wrath to power, all yearning
To truth, thy dwelling-place.

JULIAN GRENFELL.

CXXIII

On Account of Ill Health

YOU go, brave friends, and I am cast to stay behind,
To read with frowning eyes and discontented mind
The shining history that you are gone to make,
To sleep with working brain, to dream and to awake
Into another day of most ignoble peace,
To drowse, to read, to smoke, to pray that war may cease.
The spring is coming on, and with the spring you go
In countries where strange scents on the April breezes blow;
You'll see the primroses marched down into the mud,
You'll see the hawthorn-tree wear crimson flowers of blood,
And I shall walk about, as I did walk of old,
Where the laburnum trails its chains of useless gold,
I'll break a branch of may, I'll pick a violet
And see the new-born flowers that soldiers must forget,
I'll love, I'll laugh, I'll dream and write undying songs,
But with your regiment my marching soul belongs.
Men that have marched with me and men that I have led
Shall know and feel the things that I have only read,
Shall know what thing it is to sleep beneath the skies
And to expect their death what time the sun shall rise.
Men that have marched with me shall march to peace again,
Bringing for plunder home glad memories of pain,

Of toils endured and done, of terrors quite brought under,
And all the world shall be their plaything and their wonder.
Then in that new-born world, unfriendly and estranged,
I shall be quite alone, I shall be left unchanged.

EDWARD SHANKS.

CXXIV

Last Lines

I

AH! Hate like this would freeze our human tears,
And stab the morning star:
Not it, not it commands and mourns and bears
The storm and bitter glory of red war.

II

To J. H. S. M., killed in action, March 13, 1915

O BROTHER, I have sung no dirge for thee:
Nor for all time to come
Can song reveal my grief's infinity:
The menace of thy silence made me dumb.

R. W. STERLING.

CXXV

A Prayer

LORD, if it be Thy will
That I enter the great shadowed valley that lies
Silent, just over the hill,
Grant they may say, "There's a comrade that dies
Waving his hand to us still!"

Lord, if there come the end,
Let me find space and breath all the dearest I prize
Into Thy hands to commend:
Then let me go, with my boy's laughing eyes
Smiling a word to a friend.

W. H. LITTLEJOHN.

CXXVI

The God who waits

THE old men in the olden days,
Who thought and worked in simple ways,
Believed in God and sought His praise.

They looked to God in daily need,
He shone in simple, homely deed;
They prayed to Him to raise their seed.

He sowed on mountain side and weald,
He steered the plough across the field,
He garnered in their harvest yield.

And if He gave them barren sod,
Or smote them with His lightning rod,
They yielded humbly to their God.

They searched the record of their days
To find and mend their evil ways,
Which made the wrath of God to blaze.

And if no evil they could find,
They did not say, "Our God is blind,"
"God's will be done," they said, resigned.

So played the old their humble part,
And lived in peace of soul and heart,
Without pretence of Reason's art.

But we have lost their simple creed
Of simple aim and simple need,
Of simple thought and simple deed.

Their creed has crumbled as their dust,
We do not yield their God as just,
Now question holds the place of trust.

Faith blossomed like the Holy Rod,
So grew the old men's faith in God.
We cannot tread the path they trod.

We were not born to anchored creed
That measures good and evil deed—
A guide to those who guidance need.

The God the old men hearkened to
We left, and in our image drew
And fashioned out a God anew.

That iron God, who still unfed,
Sits throned with lips that dribble red
Among the sacrificial dead.

Belching their flames between the bars,
Our fires sweep out like scimitars
Across the Eden of the stars.

And souls are sold and souls are bought,
And souls in hellish tortures wrought
To feed the mighty Juggernaut.

The dripping wheels go roaring by
And crush and kill us where we lie
Blaspheming God with our last cry.

Man's cry to man the heaven fills;
We hear not in our marts and mills
The silent voices of the hills:

The message of the breathing clay,
Calling us through the night and day
To come away, to come away!

For though old creeds, had we the will,
We cannot, lacking faith, fulfil,
The God above all creed waits still.

For still beyond the city gate,
The fallow fields eternal wait
For us to drive our furrow straight.

LESLIE COULSON.

CXXVII

Judgment

SO be it, God, I take what Thou dost give,
And gladly give what Thou dost take away.
For me Thy choice is barren days and grey.
Unquestioning Thy ordered days I live,
I do not seek to sift in Reason's sieve—
Thou rangest far beyond our Reason's sway.
We are but poor, uncomprehending clay,
For Thee to mould as Thou dost well conceive.

But when my blanchèd days of sorrow end,
And this poor clay for funeral is drest,
Then shall my soul to Thy Gold Gate ascend,
Then shall my soul soar up and summon Thee
To tell me *why*. And as Thou answerest,
So shall I judge Thee, God, not Thou judge me.

LESLIE COULSON.

CXXVIII

The Hospital Ship

THERE is a green-lit hospital ship,
Green, with a crimson cross,
Lazily swaying there in the bay,
Lazily bearing my friend away,
Leaving me dull-sensed loss.
Green-lit, red-lit hospital ship,
Numb is my heart, but you carelessly dip
There in the drift of the bay.

There is a green-lit hospital ship,
Dim as the distance grows,
Speedily steaming out of the bay,
Speedily bearing my friend away
Into the orange-rose.
Green-lit, red-lit hospital ship,
Dim are my eyes, but you heedlessly slip
Out of their sight from the bay.

. . . . .

There was a green-lit hospital ship,
Green, with a blood-red cross,

Lazily swaying there in the bay,
But it went out with the light of the day—
Out where the white seas toss.
Green-lit, red-lit hospital ship,
Cold are my hands and trembling my lip:
Did you make home from the bay?

W. H. Littlejohn.

CXXIX

The Rainbow

I WATCH the white dawn gleam,
To the thunder of hidden guns.
I hear the hot shells scream
Through skies as sweet as a dream
Where the silver dawn-break runs.
And stabbing of light
Scorches the virginal white.
But I feel in my being the old, high, sanctified thrill,
And I thank the gods that the dawn is beautiful still.

From death that hurtles by
I crouch in the trench day-long,
But up to a cloudless sky
From the ground where our dead men lie
A brown lark soars in song.
Through the tortured air,
Rent by the shrapnel's flare,
Over the troubleless dead he carols his fill,
And I thank the gods that the birds are beautiful still.

Where the parapet is low
And level with the eye
Poppies and cornflowers glow
And the corn sways to and fro
In a pattern against the sky.
The gold stalks hide
Bodies of men who died
Charging at dawn through the dew to be killed or to kill.
I thank the gods that the flowers are beautiful still.

When night falls dark we creep
In silence to our dead.
We dig a few feet deep
And leave them there to sleep—
But blood at night is red,
Yea, even at night,
And a dead man's face is white.
And I dry my hands, that are also trained to kill,
And I look at the stars—for the stars are beautiful still.

LESLIE COULSON.

FRANCE,
August 8th, 1916.

CXXX

Escape

(August 6, 1916. Officer previously reported Died of Wounds, now reported Wounded. Graves, Capt. R., Royal Welsh Fusiliers)

. . . BUT I *was* dead, an hour or more:
I woke when I'd already passed the door
That Cerberus guards and half-way down the road
To Lethe, as an old Greek sign-post showed.
Above me, on my stretcher swinging by,
I saw new stars in the sub-terrene sky,
A Cross, a Rose in Bloom, a Cage with Bars,
And a barbed Arrow feathered with fine stars.
I felt the vapours of forgetfulness
Float in my nostrils: Oh, may Heaven bless
Dear Lady Proserpine, who saw me wake
And, stooping over me, for Henna's sake
Cleared my poor buzzing head and sent me back
Breathless, with leaping heart along the track.
After me roared and clattered angry hosts
Of demons, heroes, and policeman-ghosts.
"Life, life! I can't be dead, I won't be dead:

Damned if I'll die for any one," I said . . .
Cerberus stands and grins above me now,
Wearing three heads, lion and lynx and sow.
"Quick, a revolver! but my Webley's gone,
Stolen . . . no bombs . . . no knife . . . (the crowd swarms on,
Bellows, hurls stones) . . . not even a honeyed sop . . .
Nothing . . . Good Cerberus . . . Good dog . . . but stop!
Stay! . . . a great luminous thought . . . I do believe
There's still some morphia that I bought on leave."
Then swiftly Cerberus' wide mouths I cram
With Army biscuit smeared with Tickler's jam;
And Sleep lurks in the luscious plum and apple.
He crunches, swallows, stiffens, seems to grapple
With the all-powerful poppy . . . then a snore,
A crash; the beast blocks up the corridor
With monstrous hairy carcase, red and dun—
Too late: for I've sped through.
O Life! O Sun!

ROBERT GRAVES.

W 88

CXXXI

Good Wishes

GOOD luck, good health, good temper, these,
A very hive of honey-bees
To make and store up happiness,
Should wait upon you without cease,
If I'd the power to call them down
Into this stuffy little town,
Where the dull air in sticky wreaths
Afflicts a man each time he breathes.
But since I have no power to call
Benevolent spirits down at all,
I'll wish you all the good I know
And close the chapter up and go.

EDWARD SHANKS.

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